

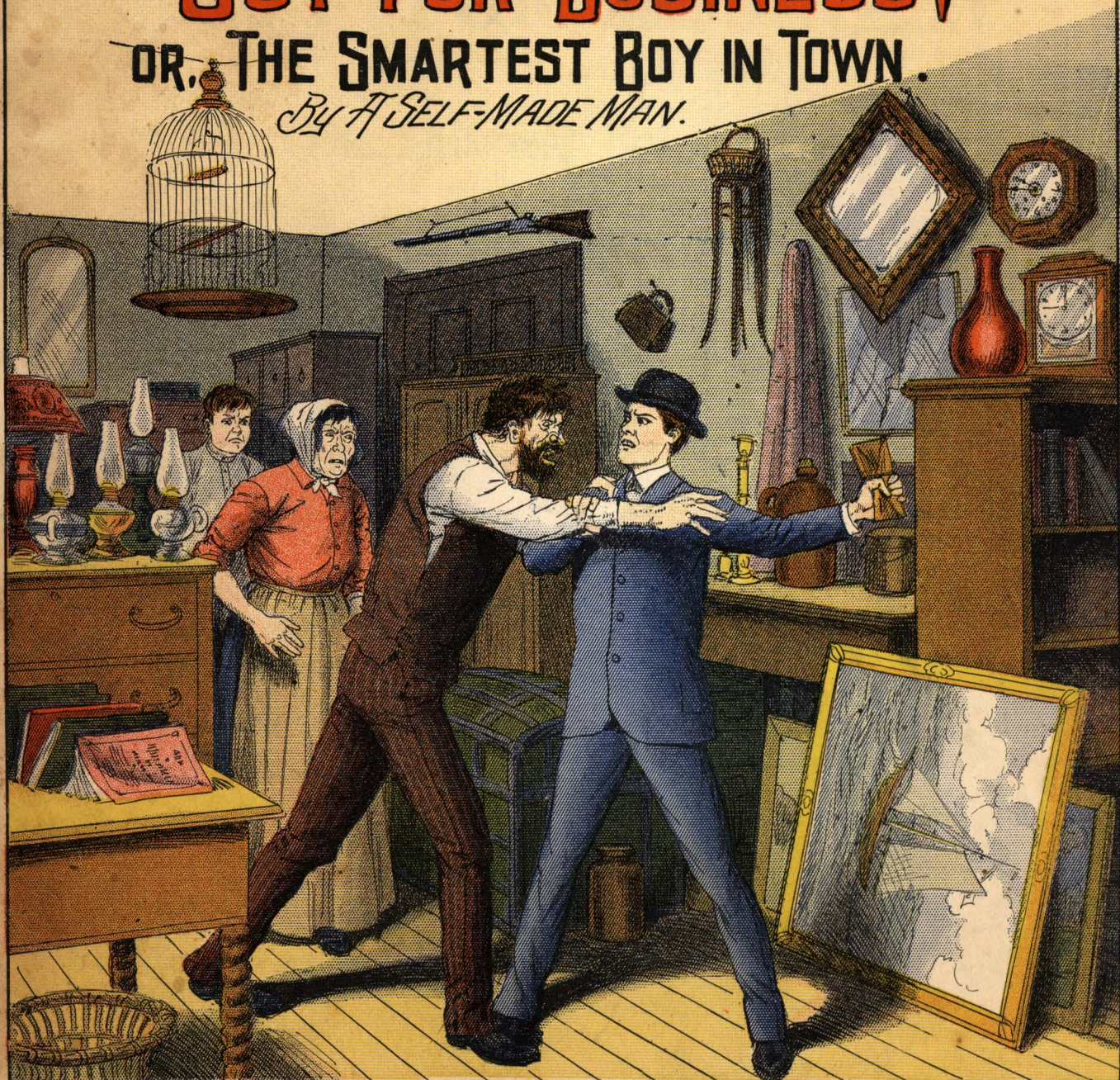
No 44.

5 CENTS.

FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY WHO MAKE MONEY.

OUT FOR BUSINESS; OR, THE SMARTEST BOY IN TOWN. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



As Joe produced his pocket-book the villainous looking woman and her shifty-eyed son came forward, as if in obedience to some signal. Then the dealer himself sprang at the boy and tried to wrest the wallet from his grasp.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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OUT FOR BUSINESS

OR,

The Smartest Boy in Town

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

"You'll have to haul in your horses, Joe," said Bob Stewart, shaking his head in a decided way.

"What do you mean, Bob?" asked his companion, a bright-eyed, curly-headed boy of sixteen, with a whimsical grin.

"Oh, you know what I mean well enough. You've got to put on the brakes, or something will drop, and I know what that something is."

"Oh, pshaw!" replied Joe Fanwood. "Major Pond is a crank."

"No, he isn't a crank. The major is all right—in his way. But there's a limit to everything. You've stretched that limit to the breaking point. Better heed my warning, Joe. Hal Fairweather told me a little while ago that he overheard the major talking to Tutor Applegate last evening about you. Applegate defended you the best he could, but Major Pond is dead sore over that rainbow decoration of the statue of Belvidere on the lawn, which he said he had traced to you. He said it was the culmination of a long series of practical jokes you have indulged in since you came to this school. He swore that he wouldn't stand for any more; that if matters went on this way the academy would become a laughing stock in the neighborhood, and would lose caste. He had fully resolved on writing to your guardian for the last time asking him to remove you from the school."

"Phew! Is that so?" ejaculated Joe, with a doleful expression that was almost comical in its intensity. "Did Major Pond really say that?"

"He did. Tutor Applegate, however, talked so strongly in your favor that the major reluctantly agreed to give you another chance—positively the very last, he said."

"Applegate is all to the mustard."

"He certainly is. All the fellows like him. You've made things a little warm for him, too; but he doesn't seem to hold any hard feelings against you."

"I'm glad that the major changed his mind."

"So am I, for I wouldn't like to see you leave. You're the life of the academy. Every one of us would have the blues for a month if you had to go. But, honestly, Joe, you do carry things too far. It may be awfully funny to us, but Major Pond has a different way of looking at things. He has outlived his bubbling days."

"I should think he had. Why, I heard that he was the liveliest fellow that West Point ever had, and narrowly escaped being fired from that academy more than once."

"That was ever so many years ago. The regular army toned him down, and made a martinet of him. He's seen hard service and distinguished himself in many of the Indian campaigns out West, and that alone is enough to sober a man up. Now he's married, and has a growing daughter—"

"Say, Bessie Pond is a daisy, isn't she?" interrupted Joe, with sparkling eyes.

"Sure. The fellows are all dead gone on her—you worst of any."

"Oh, come off, Bob," retorted Fanwood in some confusion.

"No, I won't come off. You know it's so," grinned Bob. Joe flushed up and began digging his heels in the ground.

The two boys, who were students of the Maplewood Military Academy, were standing under a spreading oak tree near the limits of the grounds in the direction of the town.

Joe Fanwood, who had been at the school since the preceding September, when the term opened, was decidedly first favorite at the academy.

Generous, impulsive, all fun and dash, he won hearts by magic.

But unfortunately he was a reckless practical joker.

That spoiled all his good qualities with Major Pond, principal and owner of the academy, who had from the beginning taken a great fancy to the boy.

At first he let Joe off with reprimands, of varying degrees of severity, even when he had previously decided to punish him severely, for the boy had such an ingenuous, taking way with him, that his very manner seemed to hypnotize the major when the two came together.

But at last Major Pond asserted himself, and every scholar in the school knew what that meant.

Joe was sentenced to various kinds of punishments, the worst of which was solitary confinement on a bread-and-water diet for a week.

This subdued him for ten days, and the major was beginning to have hopes of a cure when Joe experienced a relapse.

A choice marble statue of Apollo Belvidere, which ornamented the lawn approach to the front door of the academy, was discovered one morning highly decorated with different colored paints, which had been abstracted during the night from the tool house.

The effect was stunning, and a mob of delighted students soon gathered about it to admire the results produced by a paint brush in the hands of a skilful artist.

Of course this act of desecration was reported to the major, and he visited the statue to view with his own eyes what had happened to his Apollo.

It took one of the school factotems a whole day to remove the paint and restore the statue to its pristine whiteness.

The major was as mad as a hornet.

The first thing he did was to send for Joe Fanwood and ask him if he had perpetrated the joke.

He acknowledged his guilt without hesitation, though with no air of bravado, for the boy scorned a lie as the meanest kind of an evasion.

"You may go, sir," said the major, sternly, and that was all Joe heard of the matter until his particular friend, Bob Stewart, brought it up in the present conversation between them.

Apparently Major Pond had determined to ask Joe's guardian to recall him from the academy, and had only

yielded to his head tutor's persuasions to give the favorite of the school another chance.

Perhaps a lingering recollection of his old days at West Point, when he was something of a madcap himself, had a good bit to do with his decision, and perhaps a certain liking he had for the bright, honest, sturdily-built boy, who had not a mean streak in his nature, was at the bottom of it; at any rate, the matter was permitted to drop.

A rumor, however, got abroad that Miss Bessie Pond, the major's fifteen-year-old daughter, had seen the statue in all the glory of Joe's brilliant handiwork, and report said she had laughed herself nearly sick over it.

At any rate, there was a suspicious twinkle in her eyes for a week whenever she heard Fanwood's name mentioned.

"I guess your guardian would have hauled you over the coals if Major Pond had asked him to take you away," said Bob Stewart.

"He'd have done more than that," replied Joe, a bit soberly.

"What else could he have done?"

"Bounced me out on the cold world."

"Not quite so bad as that, Joe."

"Yes, just as bad as that. He told me when he sent me to the academy that he was giving me my last chance. If he had to take me away, or I was expelled, he would wash his hands of me forever."

"Did he actually say that?"

"He actually said that."

"Then you're taking more desperate chances than I thought," said Bob, regarding his companion with a sober countenance. "Why don't you switch off?"

"I wish I could," answered Joe, with a half-serious, half-comic expression.

"Do you mean to say you can't if you were to try hard enough?"

"I don't know," returned Joe, doubtfully. "I guess I must have been born that way."

"You have the greatest imagination for getting up ridiculous schemes I ever heard of. What ever induced you to paint that statue in all the colors of the rainbow? And how could you do it in so artistic a way? Ever take any lessons in water colors?"

"No. I just decorated him in comic opera style."

"Well, I don't think a regular artist could have done it in better shape if he had tried his best. You seem to be a regular genius at whatever you undertake. You are the best all-around athlete in the school, whether at baseball, football, rowing, swimming, in the gymnasium, or what not. I tell you, Joe, you must haul in your horns a bit, for we can't afford to lose you. We look to you to pull our ball team through this spring. You're the only pitcher the academy has ever had who could hold the Maplewood semi-professionals down. In the one game you pitched against them last fall they made only two hits, and one of them was a scratch. We never would have been in it but for you. The Maplewood Highs have

always given us a tight rub. Now, with you in the box this year, we expect to do them up in both games. You see now how much depends on you."

"You've given me quite a lecture, Bob," grinned Joe.

"I'm not lecturing you—only trying to bring you to your senses, that's all."

"I think you've enjoyed my jokes as well as anybody, Bob."

"I know I have. I like fun as well as the next fellow; but when it gets to be so serious as to threaten the smartest and most popular boy in the school with the G. B., I think we ought all go slow, especially yourself."

"So you wish me to believe that I'm the smartest and most popular boy in the academy. You say that very well, Bob, but I guess there are others."

"There may be others, but they are not in your class. You stand all by yourself. If a vote was taken on the question 'Who is King of the School,' you'd get away with the election, hands down."

"Better change the subject, Bob, or I may get a swelled head."

"No fear of that. You're not built that way."

"All right. Have it your way. But to get back to the old subject. You think I am out of danger for awhile? That Major Pond has given up the idea of writing to Mr. Jessup, my guardian?"

"Yes. I judge from what Hal said that you're safe enough if you quit your practical jokes; but if you don't—"

"My name will be Tim Flynn," snickered Joe.

"It certainly will—or Mud—take your choice."

"I'll try to be good—that is, if no temptation comes my way—for I don't want to be turned loose; but it's second nature with me to take advantage of my opportunities."

"A burnt child generally dreads the fire, but you don't seem to worry over a scorching. How many schools have you been politely requested to leave?"

"Half a dozen or more," chuckled Joe.

"Well you are a peach and no mistake."

CHAPTER II.

WINNING HIS OWN GAME.

It was a great day at the Maplewood Military Academy. The baseball nine, under Captain Joe Fanwood, was playing the Maplewoods, of the Interstate League—practically a team of professional ball players, for every member drew a salary.

The Maplewoods had won the interstate championship last year by a good margin of victories, and the team expected to repeat the performance this season, as it had been strengthened in the pitching box.

In its practice games the previous season the Maple-

woods had smothered the academy boys by the score of 16 to 0.

Late in the fall the Maplewoods had consented to a return game, and from the confident way they came on the field on that occasion any one could see that they expected to wipe the earth with the academy nine.

But to every one's surprise, and their own discomfiture, they didn't.

Maplewood Academy presented a new pitcher in the person of Joe Fanwood, a late arrival at the school.

Not a Maplewood professional got nearer than ninety feet of the plate that day.

Only thirty batters faced him.

Of these twelve retired to the bench on strikes, one got a three-base drive and was marooned on the bag, another got a base on balls, while a third put a slow ball toward shortstop which counted as a hit, though the runner got first only by an eyelash.

When the game was over the score stood 1 to 0 in the academy's favor.

As a matter of course the school boys were jubilant, and this spring their manager arranged a date with the professionals just previous to the opening of the interstate season.

That game attracted a tremendous crowd, which overflowed the fine academy grounds.

Major Pond, his wife and daughter and some friends occupied the private box in the center of the grandstand.

Just before the game commenced Bessie Pond sent Joe Fanwood, to whom she had never spoken, as the major did not permit his students to be on intimate terms with his daughter, a true lover's bow knot of baby blue ribbon to pin on his breast.

She had an idea perhaps that this little token would inspire him to do his very best that afternoon, for naturally she wanted the academy to win.

Joe intended to do his best anyway for the honor of the school, but when he received the bow knot with Bessie's compliments, he resolved to go a shade better for her sake if the thing was possible.

The Maplewoods went to the bat first, and when the major's daughter, whose bright eyes were evidently on the lookout, saw Joe walk confidently to the pitcher's position and stand there in readiness to let drive his first curve, she thought him the handsomest, manliest boy she had ever seen, and her young heart fluttered strangely and her face grew rosy as she saw her bunch of ribbon hanging just over his heart.

Joe pitched just three balls the first inning.

The first batter up pushed a daisy cutter to short and found the ball at the initial bag ahead of him; the second batter ballooned to Hal Fairweather in left garden, and the third batter hit a liner to Bailey at second, who held on to it like grim death, and the professionals took the field with a zero to their credit, while the assembled academy boys and their sympathizers made the welkin ring.

With two out and two strikes called on him, Joe pushed

a single to left in the opening inning amid great applause, but he got no further than first, as Bailey, the next batter, put up a high foul which was captured after a hard run by the third baseman of the opposing team.

The professionals' second inning was productive of no results, as the first man struck out, the second bunted and was thrown out by Joe, while the third boosted a high one to center and was a victim.

Thompson, the academy's right-fielder, led off with a clean single to left, and was then thrown out trying to steal second.

The next two batters were easy outs.

The Maplewoods came to bat the third time with blood in their eyes.

They were anxious to do Joe up.

The best they could accomplish was three successive flies to the outfield, and the academy boys came up to the plate to try their luck again.

With two out, Barry, the chunky third-baseman, got his base on an error; Fairweather soaked a stinger at the pitcher which climbed all over him, and by the time he got his hands on the ball the runner was roosting at first, while Barry was dancing around second.

Amid great applause Joe came up to the plate.

He glanced at the private box and was rewarded with a fluttering handkerchief in Bessie's hand.

"Line her out, Joe!"

"Soak it in the solar plexus!"

"Put it over the fence!"

These and similar cries came from his schoolmates.

The Maplewood pitcher grinned sardonically.

"One strike!" cried the umpire as Joe swung at the sphere and missed it.

"He's goin' ter kill dat ball, I don't t'ink," jeered a Maplewood youth, who had crawled over the fence and thus saved the price of admission.

"Strike two!" from the umpire, and a bunch of sarcastic cries rose from the crowd who favored the professionals.

Three balls were then called.

The next was the critical one, and silence and expectation hovered over the spectators.

Crack!

The ball sailed toward center like a bird, while a fierce roar of enthusiasm broke from the academy benches.

Barry and Fairweather started for the plate like winged Mercuries without a glance at the ball, for two men were out, and Joe dug out for first like a good one.

The Maplewood centre-fielder was after the ball as it circled above him.

Could he get it?

The academy boys were shrieking like young fiends, and the uproar could easily be heard a block away.

The ball was still in the air when Joe turned second, but it was beyond the fielder's reach anyway, for a moment later it hit the fence, rebounded, was picked up and fired toward the plate to catch Joe.

Joe slid for the rubber in a little cloud of dust as the ball struck the catcher's glove.

As the catcher reached to tag him, the ball slipped from his fingers and the young captain of the academy nine was safe.

Well, say, perhaps there wasn't pandemonium for several minutes.

Bailey then struck out and three runs went up on the score board.

The Maplewood batters were easy victims in the next two innings, and so were the academy boys, for that matter.

In the sixth, however, Maplewood got down to business by hitting Joe for three singles, which, with a base on balls and an error, netted them three runs, evening up the score.

Fairweather led off the sixth for the academy by striking out.

Joe was presented with his base.

Bailey put a neat single in right, advancing Joe by sharp running to third.

This was encouraging, for there was only one out, so the academy rooters got noisy and hilarious again.

Thompson had made a hit already, and another was looked for from him, but he ignominiously fanned.

Bailey, however, dashed the academy hopes to the ground by being caught trying to purloin second.

Maplewood opened the ninth with the score still 3 to 3.

An error by shortstop gave the first batter a life.

Then another fumble by Barry at third allowed the second batter to reach the first bag.

"Butter fingers!" howled a young Maplewood sympathizer in great glee.

To cap the climax the third batter put a high one back of second and Bailey dropped it.

"We got 'em on the run now," grinned the fourth batter as he came to the plate. "Just watch me put it over the fence."

It was hard luck for Joe.

Three chances for outs had been given and every one missed.

If the game was lost he couldn't be blamed.

Joe glanced at the private box and saw Bessie wave her hand to him.

That put him on his mettle and he struck out the batter, who had said he was going to put the ball over the fence.

With the bases all occupied and only one man out, the prospect was still very blue for the academy team.

But Joe fooled the next man into biting at three wide ones, and the academy crowd cheered lustily.

A few moments later the next batter up failed to locate Joe's deceptive delivery, and the boy received a tremendous ovation, for he had squeezed the team out of a very tight hole.

Joe had to lift his cap again as he came up to lead off the ninth inning.

He was frantically beseeched to soak it out of the lot.

As he tapped the rubber he flashed a look at Bessie.

She was standing up glancing eagerly at him.

The Maplewood pitcher leered as he let drive an in-curve at the boy.

Joe reached for it quick and the crack as his bat met the ball could be heard all over the ground.

A cyclonic roar followed.

The ball was going toward the left-field fence as if it had seven-league boots on.

Academy boys and their friends fell over one another, fired their hats into the air and acted generally as if they had gone crazy.

Before Joe reached second the ball was over the fence and the game won.

He trotted to the plate amid a storm of acclamations.

But he had eyes for only one thing—the white handkerchief waving in Bessie's hands and her shrieks of delight.

The score was 4 to 3 in favor of the academy team, and Joe was carried off the field on the shoulders of his comrades.

CHAPTER III.

LASHED TO A GUN.

There was high jinks at the academy that evening.

The usual hour at which the students retired was extended one hour, so that the boys could prolong their rejoicings and give full expression to their enthusiasm over the great victory of their ball team.

As for the team itself, Tutor Applegate, with Major Pond's permission, invited them to a dinner given in their honor by the under teachers, and they had a glorious old time at one of the tables in the refectory.

The other scholars turned in at ten o'clock, but the ball players had the privilege of remaining up half an hour later.

Joe Fanwood, Bob Stewart, Hal Fairweather and Dick Bailey were crossing a section of the parade ground at the rear of the main academy building when they saw a man staggering ahead of them in a very erratic fashion.

"Who the dickens is that?" asked Joe.

"Give it up," replied Bob; "but he looks as if he was full of booze."

"He's blind, staggering drunk; that's what he is," said Bailey.

"Must be one of the major's satellites," said Fairweather.

"Well, let's see who he is," grinned Joe. "It's against all rules for anyone to appear on the grounds in that condition."

They hastened their steps and so came up with the intoxicated individual, who was trying to walk an imaginary chalk line with very poor success.

"Why, it's Flynn," said Stewart, after peering into the fellow's face.

Pat Flynn was a man-of-all-work about the academy,

and, owing to his prying, sneaking habits, had become particularly obnoxious to the boys.

The four members of the ball team stepped in front of him and the man came to a sudden stop, looking at them in a foolish, leering way.

"How are you, Mr. Flynn?" asked Joe, ironically. "How are you feeling this lovely evening?"

"Faith, I'm falin' loike a bir-rd. Long loife to yez, gents. Will yez be afther tellin' where I'm at?"

"Don't you know where you are, Mr. Flynn?" grinned Joe.

"Shure I don't."

"What have you got in your coat tail pocket, Flynn?" asked Bailey.

"In me pocket, is it?" cried the Irishman, grabbing first at one coat tail and then at the other, all the time maintaining his legs with the utmost difficulty. "Faith, don't say a wurrud. It's a flask of whisky I've got. Will yez all drink wid me?"

"Don't you know that it's against the regulations to appear on the academy grounds with a bottle of whisky in your pocket?" said Joe, sternly.

"Shure I do. Do yez mane to say that this is the academy?"

"I do. We're on the parade ground."

"Howly Moses! I must get to me room to wanst. Will yez be so good as to p'int out the way to the sthable?"

"Sure we will," said Joe, giving his companions the wink. "Catch hold of his other arm, Bob, and we'll show him the way."

Fanwood and Stewart piloted the intoxicated man over to the building and up into the room where the four chums bunked.

"What are you going to do to him, Joe?" asked Fairweather, curiously.

"Oh, I ain't going to do a thing to him," grinned Joe, as he induced Flynn to seat himself on a chair. "I merely thought I'd try to improve the looks of that ugly phiz of his. Bob, oblige me by pulverizing those two pieces of chalk. And you, Dick, take that cork on the window sill and burn it in the flame of the gas."

The two boys did as directed, and while they were thus employed Flynn went off into a drunken sleep, and began to snore with his mouth wide open.

Joe took the pulverized chalk and rubbed it all over Flynn's face, except the fiery end of his nose, whose redness was thus thrown into more conspicuous relief.

On this white background the academy pitcher deftly sketched several crescents and other ornaments of a like nature in burnt cork, drawing a kind of winged crocodile on the Irishman's forehead.

Then he soaped Flynn's moustache till it stuck out as stiff as that of a French army dude, and on his chin he made as good an imitation of a goatee as he could draw with the cork.

"There, how does he look now?" asked the young artist.

"Great!" roared his companions, laughing till their sides ached.

"What do you call it, Joe?" asked Bob.

"This, fellows, is the only original what-is-it, now about to be put on exhibition for the first time for a limited period."

"What do you mean by 'about to be put on exhibition'?" asked Bob.

"Just what I said. I am going to exhibit him presently in public. This is only a private seance."

"Exhibit him in public! How do you mean?"

"I suppose you know there are a couple of old field pieces on either side of the main entrance, don't you?"

"Sure I know it."

"Well, I propose to mount Flynn astride of one of them, tie his legs together so he can't fall off and hurt himself, and leave him there for the major to gaze upon when he opens his bedroom window in the morning for a whiff of fresh air."

"Oh, come now, Joe, this will get us all in trouble," objected Bob.

"How is the major going to find out who lashed Flynn to the gun?"

"He's sure to start an investigation, and the truth is bound to come out."

"What's the difference?" retorted Joe, recklessly. "You know what Flynn is. He ought to be made an example of. There isn't a fellow in the academy but would be delighted to take advantage of this chance to get back at the rascal. He keeps us continually in hot water, one way or another. Isn't that so, Hal?"

"That's right," nodded Fairweather. "I'll stand by you in this."

"So will I," chipped in Dick Bailey.

"All right," agreed Bob. "If all of you fellows are in this thing I won't hold out. How are you going to do the trick?"

"Just wait till I go over to the toolhouse for a piece of rope," replied Joe.

While he was gone Flynn snored on utterly oblivious of the fate in store for him.

"Isn't he a beauty, the drunken scallawag?" sneered Bailey.

"What he needs is a pair of horns, and then he'd be complete," laughed Hal.

"Let's make a pair and stick 'em on?" said Bob.

"Go ahead and make them if you know how," encouraged Bailey.

Bob got some cardboard, and with a pair of scissors and some mucilage manufactured a tolerable pair of short horns, which he stuck on either side of Flynn's partially bald forehead.

He blackened them well with burnt cork.

"They look quite natural," grinned Bailey.

Joe thought so, too, when he returned with the rope and saw the addition that had been made to the victim.

He shook Flynn into a maudlin wakefulness and told him he must go along with them.

The Irishman allowed the boys to lead him downstairs on to the parade ground again, but as soon as the night air played around him he began to exhibit a tendency to boisterousness.

"This won't do at all," said Joe to his companions. "We must shut him up or the fat will soon be in the fire."

As Flynn opened his mouth to utter a roar Bailey clapped a handkerchief into it and so gagged him for the time being at any rate.

They marched him around to the front of the academy, lifted him astride of the field gun, with his face to the vent, that stood almost under Major Pond's bedroom windows, and lashed him tight, in spite of his struggles, taking care to secure his hands behind his back.

"Now let's sneak," said Bob.

"Good night, Mr. Flynn," said Joe, taking off his cap and making the fellow a mock bow.

"Good night," repeated the other three, also making low bows.

Then the four boys withdrew as noiselessly as so many shadows.

In a short time the moon rose high above the building and shone down full on the decorated features of Pat Flynn, who had been making ineffectual efforts to get free from his disagreeable situation.

At last he succeeded in getting rid of the gag.

Finding he could use his tongue, he began to roar at the top of his voice.

The major was awakened and jumped from his bed to see what caused the racket.

As he slammed up one of the windows Flynn started to sing in maudlin tones.

Major Pond gazed down at the figure that bestrode the field piece.

Never in all his life had he seen such a queer looking face, though he had run across many a grotesquely painted Indian in his time out West.

Flynn by this time had forgotten all about the circumstances which had placed him in his present situation, and had reached a kind of jovial stage of drunkenness.

"Who are you?" roared the major, angrily. "And what are you doing astride that gun?"

Flynn stopped singing and looked up at the principal of the academy.

He did not recognize that important person, nor did he appear to realize where he was.

"Are yez spakin' to me, you ould orangoutang?" he replied, with a hiccough.

"So it's you, Patrick Flynn, is it?" cried Major Pond, in some astonishment, as he recognized the man's voice. "And you're drunk again, eh? Get down from that gun instantly and go to your quarters, sir. I'll attend to you to-morrow."

"Go to blazes!" howled the Irishman. "Who are yez

anyway that presumes to order me about? One would think yez was ould Pond himself, bad luck to yez!"

"What!" gasped the enraged principal. "Do you dare talk to me in that way, you rascal?"

Flynn regarded the major with a leer for a moment; then he began bawling:

"Arrah musha, McFadden was lazy and fat, and the hair of his head struck out through his hat. He weighed forty-three, if he weighed a stun more, be jabbers I'm thinkin' he'd weighed forty-four. Hurrah!"

"Will you get off that gun, you drunken villain?" shouted Major Pond.

"Get off what gun?" replied Flynn, insolently. "What are yez talkin' about? Be the poker! It's drunk yez are yerself."

Bang!

Down went the window, and in another moment Flynn began to sing again, making the night air resound with a ditty which aroused Tutor Applegate on the third floor and brought him to his own window, where he gazed down in astonishment at the weird figure upon the field piece.

In ten minutes Major Pond, partially dressed and accompanied by one of the male servants in his shirt sleeves, appeared around the corner of the building and approached the mounted Irishman.

"Pull the scoundrel off that field piece!" cried the major to his companion.

His satellite started to obey, but found that for certain reasons he couldn't.

He reported that Flynn was securely lashed to the gun, with his hands tied behind him.

Major Pond came forward and soon convinced himself that it was a fact.

"Some of the boys are evidently at the bottom of this," he remarked grimly. "Cut the fellow loose and take him to his quarters. What a face he's got! This is Fanwood's handiwork. That boy is simply incorrigible."

Flynn was relieved from his perch, but now showed a disposition to fight.

Perceiving which in time, the other servant did not loosen his arms, but half led, half dragged the Irishman to his quarters, threw him on his bed just as he was, and left him to sleep off the effects of his debauch.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR LIFE OR DEATH.

Next morning shortly after breakfast Major Pond sent for Joe Fanwood to come to his office.

When the boy appeared he motioned him to a seat near his desk.

"Last night I found Patrick Flynn tied to one of the field pieces directly under the windows of my sleeping apartment," began the major, severely. "His face was decorated in a fantastic manner with chalk and burnt cork. Were you implicated in the affair or not, sir?"

"Do you insist on my answering that question, Major Pond?"

"I do."

"Then I am compelled to answer yes."

"Did you have any accomplices?"

"I had three companions."

"Mention their names, please."

"I would like to be excused, Major Pond."

"I insist, sir," demanded the principal.

"Then I will have to refuse to answer, because it would be manifestly unfair for me to mention who they were."

"I will give you the choice of telling me who they were or leaving the academy at once," said the principal, angrily.

"I am very sorry, sir; but I cannot say who the boys were."

"That is your decision, is it, Fanwood?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I dismiss you from the Maplewood Military Academy because you are a confirmed practical joker. I have given you every chance to reform, but you seem to be utterly heedless of the consequences. I have stretched discipline to the utmost in your favor; I have overlooked matters in your case that I never before passed over, hoping that I might reclaim you, for you possess many qualities that I admire; but I see no hope of reformation in your practical joking. It is a bad practice under any circumstances; but you carry it to excess. Go to your room and pack up. Here are \$10 for your expenses back to your home. I will settle the rest with your guardian."

Joe rose from his chair and looked at the major with a lump in his throat.

He seemed about to say something.

Then he pulled himself together, made the customary salute in true military style and marched out of the office.

Major Pond watched him go with a solemn countenance.

"Too bad. Too bad," he muttered. "He's a fine boy, but——"

He turned to examine his morning's mail.

There came a knock on the door.

"Come in," said the major.

Bessie Pond entered and danced up to her father's desk.

"I'm going to town this morning, papa, on Dandy. Is there anything I can get for you?" she asked, twining an arm caressingly around the major's neck.

"No, my darling," he replied. "Be careful of yourself."

"Yes, papa."

She kissed him and danced out of the office again.

In the meantime Joe walked solemnly across the parade ground to his quarters.

The boys had just been marched into the different class rooms for the morning's work, and so Joe found the grounds and the room vacant.

He packed his trunk slowly, as if the job was distasteful to him, and the last few necessary articles he put into a small handbag, which he slung over his shoulders.

Long before he had finished, happening to glance from the window, he saw Patrick Flynn with a grip in his hand walking sullenly toward one of the side gates which opened upon the road that led toward the distant town of Maplewood.

He had been summarily discharged by the major.

As the fellow passed the corner of the building where the principal's office was, he shook his fist at the window, and then went on his way.

Joe was almost ready to leave the room when he saw Bessie Pond, mounted on her pony Dandy, canter out at the front gate.

The sight of the girl caused a spasm of regret to cross his handsome features, and he watched her until she was out of sight down the road.

Then he went to the storeroom adjoining the gymnasium, where his bicycle was kept, got it from the boy in charge, who looked at him in some surprise, but made no remark, and wheeling it outside, mounted it and started for the same gate through which Flynn had taken his departure.

Passing through he looked back at the academy, where he had spent some very happy hours, and the lump came into his throat again, and a suspicious moisture dimmed his fine eyes.

"Good-by," he said in shaky tones. "Good-by forever. It's tough leaving you in this way, but it can't be helped. I couldn't have done different if my life depended on my actions. I wish—well, what's the odds? I'm done for in that direction, so what's the use of thinking about the matter any more?"

He started at a smart pace down the road, and soon a grove of trees shut the military academy from his sight.

After covering perhaps four miles he drew near a lane running up to a somewhat pretentious mansion.

Through the trees he saw a flutter of white approaching the road.

In a few minutes he recognized Bessie Pond and her white pony Dandy.

As they turned into the highway ahead of him a man rose from the shrubbery, waved his hands and shouted wildly, and then threw a big stone at the pony.

The animal shied violently, the saddle girth broke and the girl was unseated, and only saved herself from a nasty fall by throwing her arms around the pony's neck, which dashed off down the road at a mad pace.

"Great Scott! She'll be killed!" cried Joe, starting after her at full speed.

As he passed the lane he gave a momentary glance at the man, who was shrinking back among the bushes after accomplishing his dastardly action.

That one glimpse enabled Joe to recognize Patrick Flynn.

"The scoundrel!" gritted the boy, as he pedaled away for all he was worth. "He did that in revenge for his discharge from the academy. If Bessie is hurt I'll see that he gets what's coming to him."

Joe saw that the pony had taken the bit in her teeth and was wholly unmanageable.

The boy had hopes that he would be able to catch up with the little mare and stop her before she shook Bessie off.

But he soon saw that he had a hard chase ahead of him.

A stern chase is always a long one, and this was no exception to the rule.

The question was could Joe hold out long enough to overtake the frantic pony.

He put on steam in good earnest.

Never before had he got such speed out of his wheel.

As the early morning sunshine glistened on the steel spokes they glowed like long needles of fire.

He saw with satisfaction that he was steadily gaining on the pony, which, though unmanageable, was impeded by Bessie's tight hug about her arching neck.

Suddenly he heard the long shriek of a locomotive near at hand.

All at once it came to his mind that they were closing in on the railroad tracks of the D., P. & L. road, which passed by Maplewood.

He rose a bit from his bent attitude and glanced away to the left.

A long freight train was coming down the line at a ten-mile-an-hour clip.

Two problems instantly presented themselves to his mind.

Would the pony reach the track in time to pass clear of the train?

If so, would he be shut off himself by the cars, and thus give the animal a lead he could not expect to overcome?

There was still another, and truly awful, possibility that the fleeing animal might reach the track only in time to be dashed with her fair rider to their death against the moving freight.

Joe's blood turned cold and the perspiration oozed out in great drops on his forehead as he thought of the last contingency, which loomed up with startling distinctness before his eyes.

"I must catch Dandy before she reaches the track," he breathed. "I've simply got to do it if I break a leg."

Now they struck a slight declivity which ran down to the tracks.

The freight train was coming on fast.

Joe saw now that the pony would never be able to clear it.

It was the question of life or death for him to reach the fleeing little mare in a very few seconds and turn her aside down the tracks.

He made the wheel hum as it never hummed since it came from the maker's.

Inch by inch he crept up on the terror-stricken animal.

Now he reached and was overlapping its flanks.

Now up to where the saddle girth had been.

The engine was crossing the roadway ahead, and it

seemed as if nothing could avert a catastrophe that would involve even Joe himself in his headlong rush.

Fairly dizzy from the terrible strain he had imposed on himself, he reached out one hand and grasped the pony's bridle as he leaped to the ground.

Then he turned off to the right, dragging the animal around with him.

Bessie just missed bumping into the cars by a hair's breadth.

The pony tossed its head wildly, but Joe held on for all he was worth.

The boy was hanging back, throwing his weight upon Dandy.

The engineer and fireman were looking back with starting eyes at the struggle beside the track, while the crew of the train at different points upon the cars were also intensely interested in the outcome of the affair.

The animal had to slow down, whether she wanted to or not.

At last she came to a dead stop.

Joe rushed around to the terrified girl's aid.

"Joe Fanwood!" she exclaimed, as she dimly recognized him.

Then she slipped inertly into his waiting arms.

She had fainted.

CHAPTER V.

JOE'S RESOLVE.

Joe laid Bessie Pond tenderly on the grass as the caboose, the last car on the freight, flashed by them, with the conductor and another man standing at the doorway looking back.

He tied Dandy to the fence, picked up his wheel and stood it against a tree, and then returned to the unconscious girl.

Taking her into his arms again he carried her to a little stream which ran through a culvert under the tracks.

Placing her on the ground, with her head on his knee, he began to sprinkle water on her face and to chafe her temples.

Her golden hair had escaped its confining pins and lay spread out in the sunshine like a mass of glittering strands.

She was as pale as death, and the fluttering breath came in little gasps between her pearly teeth that showed through her parted lips.

She was a beauty, and no mistake, but Joe wasn't thinking of her good looks just then.

All his thoughts were concentrated in the effort to bring her back to her senses.

After a little while she uttered a sigh and opened her eyes.

Her gaze met Joe's and something like astonishment came into her face.

"Do you feel better, Miss Bessie?" he asked eagerly.

"Better!" she exclaimed wonderingly. "Why, what is the matter with me? What has happened?"

"Your pony was frightened and ran away with you, don't you remember? I chased you on my wheel, and only caught up in time to save Dandy from going headlong against a freight train."

"Oh!" she cried, as a look of terror flashed from her eyes. "I remember. Yes. It was dreadful. And you saved my life, and Dandy's! How shall I ever thank you enough, Joe Fanwood? Papa will be so grateful to you. I am the only little girl he has. He will never, never forget what you have done for me as long as he lives. And I never will forget it either."

"All right, Miss Bessie," replied the boy, cheerfully. "I'm awfully glad I was able to do you this service."

"Aren't you good? And so, so brave! Why, you risked your own life to save me."

"Well, s'pose I did? It's all right. You're not hurt, and I'm perfectly satisfied."

"I am very, very grateful to you. You believe me, don't you?"

"Sure I do, and if you're satisfied we'll let it go at that."

"But I shall always be grateful, Joe Fanwood. Always. I'm sure papa won't be able to do enough for you now."

"Your father won't have much chance to do anything for me, Miss Bessie," said the boy, with a shade of emotion in his tones.

"Won't have a chance," she ejaculated, sitting up and trying to secure her hair. "Why not? What do you mean?" regarding him with a puzzled expression.

"Oh, nothing," replied Joe, gulping down his feelings.

"But I want to know," she persisted in her wilful way.

"I don't think the matter would interest you, Miss Bessie."

"You talk so strangely. I've never spoken to you before, have I? And just to think you have saved my life! We must be good friends after this," she concluded with a shy eagerness that was very bewitching.

"I wish we could, but I'm afraid we can't."

"Why can't we? I know papa won't object after——"

"The reason is because I probably won't see you again."

"Won't see me again!" opening her eyes in great surprise. "I don't understand you."

"I have left the academy."

"You have——"

She stopped and looked at him as if she could not believe the evidence of her ears.

"Your father dismissed me this morning because—because I'm the worst boy in the school. That's about the size of it, though he didn't actually say so. From the way he spoke I guess he meant it. So you see——"

"My father dismissed you—you, Joe Fanwood! The brightest, smartest boy in the academy! You who won the ball game yesterday! I can't, I really can't believe it."

"I'm sorry to say it's a fact. Well, it was my own fault. I've played all sorts of jokes there. I nearly spoiled that statue of Apollo. I——"

"Wasn't that the funniest thing I ever saw in all my life!" she cried, with a rippling laugh, as the recollection of the figure in all its ridiculous decoration recurred to her mind. "I never, never saw anything half so comical. What a genius you are!" admiringly.

"I may be a genius, but I guess your father thinks I am a fool. At any rate, what I and three of my friends did last night to Pat Flynn, who was employed about the stables, and whom we caught drunk on the parade grounds at half-past ten, settled me with Major Pond. I was called to his office this morning, and after I had admitted my guilt I was dismissed, you may as well call it expelled, because I refused to give the names of my comrades in the affair. That's all there is to it. I'm now no longer a student. It's rather rough on me, but it's my own fault."

"It's too bad," said Bessie. "But my father will overlook everything now just as soon as I tell him what you have done for me."

"I'm afraid I couldn't go back, Miss Bessie."

"Not even for my sake?" she asked, earnestly.

"For your sake I'd do anything; but please don't ask me. I've made up my mind to start out in the world on my own hook and see what I can do. Were I to return to the academy it would only be a question of a short time before I got myself into some other scrape. I've given your father trouble enough. He's been very lenient with me any way. You can't expect him to stand for everything."

"But I don't want you to leave the academy," she said, poutingly.

"I have already left."

"You must go back with me," coaxingly.

Joe shook his head.

"I'd like to, but——"

"But what?"

"I'm too proud to return after having been dismissed."

"But papa will make that all right."

"I dare say that under the present circumstances he'd be willing to stretch a point. But I don't care to ask him to do so. I'm going to try my luck in Maplewood. If you'll permit me to write to you I'll let you know how I am getting on. Hustling for a living may cure me of my tendency for practical joking. At any rate, I think I ought to give it a trial."

"Well," replied Bessie, regretfully, "if you are determined not to go back of course I can't persuade you to do so. I shall be glad if you will write to me, and I will answer your letters if you enclose your address. If you should change your mind about coming back to school you can let me know."

"I promise to do so in that case," agreed Joe. "Now I had better go back with you to the point where your saddle came off, and fix it on again somehow, so that you can get home."

Joe unhitched the pony and gave the bridle to Bessie to lead him by, while he walked by her side, pushing his wheel along.

The saddle was found in the middle of the road, and Joe managed to patch the girth so that it promised to hold if the girl walked her animal to the academy.

"Allow me to help you up," he said, politely.

"You will write me soon, won't you?" she asked, holding him by the hand.

"Yes. Good-by, Miss Bessie."

"Good-by, Mr. Fanwood."

The boy mounted his wheel and rode off toward Maplewood, Bessie watching him until he was out of sight.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT FOR BUSINESS.

Joe Fanwood hired a small furnished room in Maplewood, arranged with an expressman to go out to the academy and bring in his trunk, and after eating his dinner at a restaurant started out to take a survey of the business section of the town.

As he passed a popular cafe he was buttonholed by Jake Stebbins, manager of the Maplewood League ball team.

"Hello, Fanwood," he said. "What are you doing in town? Come in and have something."

"Thanks, Mr. Stebbins, but I don't drink," replied Joe, politely.

"Well, have a cigar, then."

"I don't smoke either."

"Don't you? Well, I wish all the members of my team were like you. I have to keep a mighty sharp look out on the boys to prevent them from crooking the elbow during the season. There's a heavy fine goes with the offense, but the lads are up to all sorts of tricks to evade it. Goslin, my new pitcher, is the worst offender. I got him from Kansas City. He's a fine slab artist, but I find him pretty unreliable. The Western League let him go because they couldn't control his habits, I guess."

"We didn't find him such an extraordinary puzzle yesterday," grinned Joe, forgetting that he was no longer a member of the academy nine. "We made six hits off his delivery, which was pretty good, considering our team is not in your class."

"You made half the hits yourself, Fanning—two homers and a single. You played the whole game. My men only reached you in one inning. If you hadn't been in the game it would have been a farce comedy. If I had you on my team I'd let Goslin slide; upon my word I would."

"Much obliged for your good opinion of me, Mr. Stebbins."

"Don't mention it. You deserve it all right. By the way, have you chaps a holiday to-day?"

"No. Why?"

"I didn't know but you had, seeing you in town. It isn't often you lads get outside your grounds during the term."

"No, not often."

"Got time to come out to the grounds this afternoon?"

"I don't know," replied Joe, doubtfully.

"Well, I'll give you a pass to the grandstand," said the manager, producing his card and writing a few words on the back of it. "Drop out if you can. We play the Roslyn. Game begins at three. We open the regular season to-morrow at Ridgewood."

The manager shook hands with Joe and walked down the street, while the boy continued his stroll.

When Joe got back to his lodging-house he found that the expressman had come back without his trunk, but had brought a note in place of it from Major Pond.

The major wrote in very feeling terms of the obligation he was under to the boy for saving his daughter's life, and urged him to return to the academy at once, as everything would be overlooked, and he was very anxious to thank him in person.

Joe, however, had decided not to return, and so he wrote Major Pond a note to that effect, giving his reasons for his resolve, and thanking the principal for his many kindnesses in the past, which he said he was now able to appreciate that the ties between himself and the school had been severed.

He sent this note out by the expressman next morning with the request that his trunk be sent on.

Major Pond read the note with much regret, but he felt that he could not do otherwise than comply with Joe's request, and so the trunk was delivered to the expressman, and by him left at the boy's lodgings.

Joe had no definite idea what he would do for a living when he left his lodgings on the following morning.

To go into a store or a shop and work for the meager wages which would be offered to him, a greenhorn in the world, was not what he was looking for.

He was ambitious to engage in some business that, through the exercise of energy and perseverance, he could make good money at in the near future.

His plan was a good one, but being young and inexperienced, he did not know how to put it into execution.

While he considered the important question he mechanically turned into a side street off the main business thoroughfare, and presently saw a sign in a small store window which read: "Agent Wanted."

Joe stopped and studied the sign attentively.

"Maybe that would suit me if I could catch on. I'll go in and see what it amounts to."

So he entered the store, which was filled with samples of agricultural machinery.

There were also shelves loaded down with a lot of miscellaneous truck.

He asked for the proprietor, and a very small youth, who was dusting the articles on the shelves, referred him to a small room at the back of the store, where he found a wizened little man reading the morning paper.

"Are you the proprietor?" asked Joe, in a business-like way.

"Yes. What can I do for you?" asked the man, looking at the visitor over his spectacles.

"You have a sign in your window 'agent wanted.' I would like to know what the business is, and whether I would fill the bill in case I found it suited me."

The man looked Joe all over before he replied.

"Yes; I want an agent to sell agricultural machinery and other things, but I hardly think you'd suit."

"How do you know I wouldn't?" asked Joe, politely but decisively.

The proprietor of the establishment seemed rather struck by Fanwood's reply.

He put down the paper and looked him over again more carefully than before.

"Well," he said, with a slight smile, "you're a boy. What I want is a man—and a man with experience."

"I'm not a man, and I haven't any experience selling agricultural machinery or anything else; but I'm looking for work that has a future in it. I'm not afraid to hustle where there's anything in it for me. Perhaps it might pay you to give me some idea what you expect your agent to do; what the prospects are for a good man, and other facts that would give me some idea of the business. Then if I thought I could do anything worth while in your line I'd like you to give me a chance at it."

Evidently Joe's words and manner produced a favorable impression on the man, for he pointed to a chair beside his desk and asked him to sit down.

"You are rather young to embark in this business; still if you have the right stuff in you there is no reason why you shouldn't in time make a first-class agent. What have you been doing?"

"I've been at school until yesterday," replied Joe.

"Then you are quite green in the ways of business," said the man, pursing up his lips, which the boy took to be an unfavorable sign.

"I admit it. But the fact doesn't worry me in the least. I've got to learn to make my living, and the sooner I begin the better. I don't care to tie myself down to store or shop work. I wouldn't like it, and so it would be a clear waste of time and energy. I want to take up something in which I could interest myself. Something that offered encouragement for me to go at it for all I'm worth. I think I'd like to sell things to people. If an article struck me as being good I am sure I would take an interest in convincing people in need of that article that they ought to buy it. Take this electric fan you have on your desk, for instance; there is something that everybody needs in summer. Of course persons without electric connections in their buildings could not use it; but wherever the facilities exist to supply it with power there it ought to be. If I had an office I wouldn't be without one myself in the hot term."

Joe spoke earnestly and animatedly, and the man smiled.

"I am the general agent in Maplewood for that machine," he said. "How would you like to try your hand

at selling them? A few days work about town canvassing stores, offices and factories would probably give me a line on your adaptability for selling merchandise."

"I would like to try it, sir."

"Then you shall. I rather think you're cut out for a good agent and canvasser. You have a pleasing address, a convincing manner, and you talk well as far as I can determine at this short interview. Your youth and lack of experience is all that seems to be against you. This electric fan is an entirely new article in this place, and I haven't started to introduce it yet. I will give you a bunch of the literature for you to read, up and familiarize yourself with the advantages and good qualities of the machine. I have a perfect working model in miniature, which you can carry around to make a practical demonstration with. You can leave some of the circulars and other printed matter wherever you call and keep a record of every place you visit, with an eye to calling later if you interest the party but he does not take a machine at once."

Mr. Jackson, that was the general agent's name, then proceeded to give Joe an insight into the methods generally followed by canvassing agents in their efforts to make a sale.

In his earlier days he had been a successful agent himself, and he made the boy wise to many points that would have taken him months to learn by experience.

After Joe had studied up the electric fan literature he felt fully prepared to go out and hustle, and so, with his pockets full of printed matter, and the model machine on his arm, he started out for business

CHAPTER VII.

JOE DINES WITH BESSIE POND AND HER FATHER.

Joe succeeded in convincing two people before twelve o'clock that the electric fan was just what they needed for the coming summer, which would soon be upon them.

He also disposed of one at the restaurant where he got his dinner, to be placed on the cashier's desk.

The house itself was supplied with revolving wooden fans dependent from the ceiling.

During the afternoon the boy got orders for six more of the machines, making nine in all he sold on his first day.

As his commission was fifty cents on each fan sold, he felt pretty well satisfied with the results of the day's work.

Mr. Jackson was both surprised and pleased when he showed him the nine orders which were to be delivered C. O. D. next day.

"I guess I didn't make any mistake in you, young man," he said. "If you go on the way you have begun you'll turn out a hummer. Do you want any money on account? I don't usually pay any commission at all in advance, but the showing you have made to-day is deserving of some

encouragement, so I will make an exception in your favor."

"No, sir. I don't need any money to-day."

"Then I'll pay you the \$4.50 you earned to-day to-morrow night."

"All right, sir. That's satisfactory."

Next day was Friday and Joe sold six electric fans.

That night he wrote a letter to his guardian, telling him that he had severed his connection with the academy, and the cause that had led to it.

He thanked Mr. Jessup for his kindness and consideration to him in the past, hoped that he would forgive his delinquencies, and told him that he was now fully determined to make his way in the world solely by his own efforts.

He mailed the letter in the morning, enclosing his Maplewood address, so that his guardian could communicate with him if so disposed, and that day sold five more of the fans, and every one to people who at first refused to consider his proposition and only grudgingly allowed him to give a demonstration of their utility.

When he reached his lodgings that afternoon he found that a messenger from the academy had been there and left a note for him.

It was a pressing invitation from Major Pond that he take dinner with himself and Bessie on Sunday afternoon at three.

"We shall expect you, my dear boy, so don't fail to come," the note concluded.

The prospect of seeing Bessie Pond again was an alluring one, and so Joe decided that he would accept the invitation.

Accordingly he dressed himself with unusual care Sunday afternoon, and about two o'clock he took the trolley which passed within a short distance of the academy.

He arrived at his destination shortly before three, and was shown into the private sitting-room, where he found Bessie waiting to receive him.

"It was so good of you to come, Mr. Fanwood," she cried, impulsively stretching out both hands to him as he stepped forward to greet her.

"I was very glad to come, Miss Bessie," he said, with flushed face. "It was very kind of your father to invite me."

"Papa was anxious to see you and thank you in person for saving my life the other day. He was greatly disappointed when you declined to return to the academy, and so was I."

"I hope neither you nor your father are offended at the course I have taken," said Joe, earnestly.

"Oh, no. You had a perfect right to act as you thought best. Only we think it would be ever so much better for you if you would decide to come back next term and finish your course."

"I don't say that it wouldn't; but I'm afraid that Mr. Jessup, my guardian, when he learns what has occurred will wash his hands of me altogether."

"Why should he do that?" asked Bessie, in some surprise.

"Well, I've given him a good deal of trouble, one way or the other. He is in no way related to me, and only agreed to take charge of me because my father was an old and valued friend of his. Under these circumstances I have decided to relieve him of the responsibility and hoe my own way myself. I am not afraid but I can do it. In fact, I never felt so independent and self-reliant as since your father politely told me that the Maplewood Military Academy would know me no more."

"I hope you're not angry with papa for dismissing you. You know you told me that you felt you deserved it. At any rate, papa would give a great deal to have you back again."

"I have only the pleasantest feeling toward your father, Miss Bessie, I assure you. I have no kick coming at all. I think it will do me good to hustle a little for myself. I hope it will take the foolishness out of me. If a fellow has the right kind of ambition, it doesn't do him any good to have things come his way too easy. Kinds of spoils him, don't you think?"

"I am sure I don't know. Papa will understand that better than I. I only hope you will get along nicely whatever you do."

"You are very good to say that, Miss Bessie," replied Joe, gratefully.

"Why shouldn't I wish you every good fortune? Am not I under the greatest of obligations to you?"

"I wish you wouldn't mention that, Miss Bessie. I was only too pleased to have the opportunity to do you a service."

"Thank you, Mr. Fanwood," said Bessie, with a blush.

At this point Major Pond entered the room.

"I am very glad to see you, Fanwood," he said, taking Joe by the hands.

Then he proceeded to tell the boy how much he appreciated the nerve and courage he had displayed in saving his daughter's life.

"It is, of course, impossible for me ever to repay the debt I owe you," continued the major. "Such a service as that is beyond price. I wish, however, to offer you a slight evidence of my appreciation, as well as a token of remembrance, and so beg your acceptance of this watch and chain."

He handed the boy a box which bore the imprint of the most prominent jeweler in Maplewood.

Joe opened it and found an elegant gold watch and chain, suitably inscribed on the case.

"I thank you very much, Major Pond, for this valuable present, and it will give me great pleasure to wear it."

"And I hope you will wear this also, as coming from me, Mr. Fanwood," said Bessie, stepping up and presenting him with a splendid tie held together with a diamond pin of considerable value.

Joe accepted it with much pleasure and thanked her for it.

"I believe dinner is ready," remarked Major Pond. "So we will adjourn to the next room. You may take Bessie in."

Joe offered his arm very politely to the young lady, and she laughingly accepted it.

The dinner was an enjoyable affair, and Joe thought Bessie not only the most charming, but the brightest girl he had ever met.

Through the windows he occasionally caught glimpses of many of his old schoolmates wandering around the parade ground, or perched about the doors, and at the open windows of their quarters.

This sight of the boys made him feel a trifle homesick, and he almost regretted that he had refused the major's pressing invitation to return.

However, he had put his shoulder to the wheel to make his own way in the world, and he had no thought of backing out.

After dinner Major Pond asked him to give his own version of the capture of the runaway pony, which he did with due modesty.

"Bessie told me that she thought it was a tramp who had frightened Dandy."

"No, Major Pond, it was not a tramp, but Patrick Flynn. He came out of the bushes by the side of the road and deliberately stampeded the pony, throwing up his hands, hollering, and finally throwing a stone at the animal."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed the major, angrily. "I ought to have the rascal arrested if I could lay my hands on him."

When the boys were marched into the refectory to supper Bessie asked Joe if he would like to go out with her on the river a little while in her own special boat.

He said he would be delighted to do so, and so they went.

They spent an hour on the placid bosom of the little river which flowed through Major Pond's property.

The young people found a great deal of pleasure in each other's society, and finally when it came time for Joe to take his departure for Maplewood he said he hoped Bessie would permit him to visit her soon again.

"I shall always be pleased to see you whenever you find it convenient to call," she replied, in a tone which left no doubt in his mind but that he would be welcome.

"Thank you, Miss Bessie," he replied. "I will send you word when you may expect me."

With that he bade her good-by, receiving a gentle pressure from her hand, and started for the trolley road.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOE'S EARLY SUCCESS.

During the next week Joe worked with great zeal to introduce the electric fans into Maplewood, and succeeded so well that his commissions amounted to \$25.

On Saturday morning he received a letter from his

guardian expressing surprise at the intelligence he had received from Joe.

While he admired the boy's pluck in facing the world on his own responsibility, which was very like his father, still he said he did not approve of the course he had taken and strongly advised him to go back and finish the term at the academy.

He further said that he had received a letter from Major Pond containing a full explanation of the situation, in which he had referred to Joe's thrilling rescue of his daughter, and his earnest desire that Fanwood would come back to school.

The letter enclosed a draft on the Maplewood National Bank for \$50, payable to Joe's order.

He answered this letter immediately, thanking Mr. Jessup for his expressions of good will as well as for the draft, which he said he did not need, as he was already making money selling electric fans in town, but would keep it lest he offend him, which he did not wish to do.

As for returning to the academy he said he had made up his mind not to do so, and gave his reasons for his determination.

The following week ushered in a warm wave, and this greatly assisted him in his electric fan sales, so that he cleared over \$40 in the six days.

On Sunday he paid another visit to the academy, spending a very enjoyable afternoon and evening with Bessie, and taking tea with her and the major.

During his previous visit he had explained to Major Pond what he was doing in Maplewood and had also told Bessie something about his plans.

They were now both anxious to know how he was getting on.

He gave them the full particulars of his success with the fans up to date, and received their congratulations.

The major gave him an order for one dozen of the fans for his school.

Joe and Bessie went walking after tea, and on their way back ran against Bob Stewart and Hal Fairweather.

Fanwood had already written to Bob a full explanation of why he had left the academy so unceremoniously.

Stewart read the letter to his roommates, Fairweather and Bailey, and the true reason for Joe's mysterious disappearance was soon known all over the school.

One of the results of the letter was that Stewart, Fairweather and Bailey appeared before Major Pond in his study and confessed that they were the ones who had been mixed up with Fanwood in the Pat Flynn affair.

The principal accepted their statement, sentenced them to one week's confinement in the guard house, and then suspended the punishment indefinitely.

"Hello, Joe," exclaimed Bob, in great surprise, grasping him by the hand and shaking it violently, an example immediately followed by Fairweather. "Awfully glad to see you. Are you coming back to us to finish the term?"

"No," replied Fanwood, whose glowing countenance

showed that he was delighted to meet a couple of his old chums again.

He did not introduce them to Bessie, believing Major Pond would not approve of it, and the girl, understanding the situation, walked on ahead.

"You don't mean to say that you've left us for good?" asked Hal, anxiously.

"I can't answer that question yet, Hal. I may come back next term and I may not. Just as I happen to feel on the subject when the time comes."

"Well, I hope you will come back. We all feel lost without you."

"What are you doing anyway?" asked Bob, curiously.

"What am I doing?" grinned Joe. "Oh, I'm out for business."

"Out for business!" cried both boys in surprise.

"That's it exactly. I'm hustling on my own hook."

"At what?" asked Fairweather.

"At present I'm selling electric fans."

"How are you making out?" from Bob.

"Tiptop. Made \$40 this week."

"You don't say."

"That's right. And Major Pond has just given me an order for a dozen fans for the academy that will be delivered to-morrow."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Bob. "You're doing all right."

They had now reached one of the side gates, and after a few more words the boys parted, and Joe rejoined Bessie.

"When shall I see you again, Mr. Fanwood?" asked the girl as she was bidding him good night at the gate a couple of hours later.

"Well, that will depend."

"On what?"

"Whether you're very anxious to see me soon again or not."

"Why, of course I want to see you soon again," she exclaimed, with a slight blush. "Have you any reason to doubt that?"

"No; but I'd like to make a little bargain with you."

"A bargain?"

"Yes. Would you care to have me come every Sunday afternoon?"

"I should be delighted to have you do so."

"Will your father be pleased?"

"Yes; I think I can answer for papa."

"Very well. If you'll agree to drop calling me Mr. Fanwood, and just call me plain Joe when we're by ourselves, and at the same time let me address you as Bessie without the formality of miss, why, I'll not miss a Sunday till you go away to the seaside or the mountains. Am I asking too much—Bessie?"

She looked down with a bright blush, and tapped the ground with the point of her dainty little shoe before making any reply.

"I haven't offended you, have I?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, Joe," she answered softly, looking up into his face

with her wonderfully expressive eyes. "How could you ever offend me? I owe my life to you, and I shall never forget that as long as I live."

The fourth week proved a banner one with Joe, for he succeeded in placing the fans in many big offices, and collected nearly \$50 in commissions.

By this time he had pretty well exhausted the available places in town, and so as he made only \$15 on the following week he decided to drop the electric fan.

After paying all his expenses he found he had something over \$200 deposited in the Maplewood Savings Bank, and this was a comforting reflection.

Joe, after a talk with Mr. Jackson, and a study of agricultural machine literature, decided he would try his hand at it and see what he could do.

If he had any business worth mentioning his profits would be much above what he had been reaping from the electric fans.

So at the beginning of the following week he hired an automobile, took several lessons in the management of it, and then started out around the nearby country on a visit to the farmers.

At the very first farm he struck he found that the owner was preparing to visit Maplewood to buy a new reaper for the coming season.

Joe saw his chance to sell one, and he buzzed the farmer for an hour on the subject, showing him illustrations from all points of view of a machine that Mr. Jackson was the agent for, and which he claimed was superior to any other reaper for the price on the market.

The farmer finally agreed to visit Jackson's store and have a look at the real thing on exhibition there.

Joe carried him to town in his auto, showed him the reaper, and finally talked him into buying it.

This sale added \$100 to Fanwood's savings, and he was tickled to death over his good luck.

During the rest of the week he sold several improved plows, a barrow or two, and a number of other minor farming implements, netting altogether another \$100 in commissions.

"I guess I'm doing pretty well for a beginner," he said to Mr. Jackson, when he collected what was coming to him at the close of the week.

"You're doing fine, Fanwood. I hadn't the slightest idea you would develop so quick. You've averaged about \$50 per week since you started in six weeks ago."

Joe now began to get the idea into his head that if he could do so well selling for Jackson, he ought to be able to do still better if he worked direct for some big manufacturing house.

So he opened a correspondence with several concerns in different parts of the country, with the view of acting as their sole agent in that locality.

Only one house took up his proposition on the spot.

That was a Cincinnati publishing and printing company whose specialty was the manufacture of elegantly illuminated advertising calendars.

The firm forwarded Joe several specimens with their terms, and a letter expressing their hope that Fanwood would take up the business, which they represented as a very profitable one to a hustler.

After figuring the matter out he concluded to give the work a trial, and sent them the necessary deposit to cover a complete line of samples, which amount was to be reimbursed when he sent in his first order.

While waiting for his samples Joe hired a small office in a business block on the main street of Maplewood, and started in to furnish it up in a style that suited his fancy.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE SECOND-HAND STORE.

Joe bought a small desk, three chairs, a table on which to display his samples when in the office, and an oblong rug to take the place of a carpet.

Then he had a painter letter his name on the door, and on the directory downstairs in the main corridor.

He left an order at a printer's for business cards, letter-heads, envelopes, and billheads.

After that he provided himself with a book in which to enter his orders, together with whatever stationery he would need.

"All I need now is a picture or two on the walls," he said to himself as he viewed his little den with a complacent eye. "Then as soon as my samples get here I'll start out for business."

Down a side street a few blocks away was a second-hand store—a sort of old curiosity shop—kept by an unpleasant-looking Italian named Dominico Bosko.

Joe had passed the shop several times, and had stopped to gaze at the nondescript articles displayed for sale in the windows.

He remembered that the last time he went by there was a striking marine oil-painting of a yacht under full sail in one of the windows labelled \$3.

Joe had a weakness for nautical pictures, so it occurred to him that he would buy that picture if it had not been sold.

So he started for the shop.

On reaching the place he was much disappointed to find that the coveted picture had been removed from the window.

"I suppose it has been sold," he muttered. "That's always the way. When you make up your mind to buy something that's been hanging around for an age somebody else is sure to step in just before you and carry it off."

He glanced in at the doorway, hesitating whether to enter or not and inquire about the picture.

The proprietor, his wife, with a handkerchief tied over her head, and an overgrown boy, presumably their son, were busy moving a heavy piece of furniture at the rear of the store.

Joe didn't like their looks for a cent.

However, he was anxious to get that particular marine.

painting if it was still unsold, or one something like it, and as he noticed a framed picture standing on end against a bookcase in the middle of the store which struck him as being the painting he was in search of, he walked into the store to get a better look at it.

It proved to be the identical picture, and while Fanwood was looking at it Dominico Bosko came forward, and with a penetrating glance, as if he was sizing the boy up, asked him what he wanted.

"What do you want for this picture?" asked Joe, thinking from the careless way the painting was treated that he might be able to get it for even less than what it had been marked up at in the window.

The second-hand man looked Fanwood all over again before he answered.

The boy was well dressed and looked prosperous, so Bosko fixed his price accordingly.

"Nine dol'," he said, with a leer. "Ver' cheap."

"What!" exclaimed the astonished young agent. "Nine dollars!"

"Nine-a dol'," repeated Bosko.

"Not on your life," replied Joe. "I'll give you three."

"T'ree-a dol'! No take-a such small-a price."

"All right. You're the doctor," answered Fanwood, turning to leave.

The Italian stopped him.

"How much you give-a?"

"I told you how much I'd give—three dollars. You had it in the window a few days ago marked \$3."

"Dis not-a da same pic'."

Joe, however, knew better.

"Well, three dollars is my limit. Take it or not as you choose."

"Make-a five dol'. I take-a him."

"No, you won't. At least, not from me. I won't give a cent more than three dollars."

"I tak-a four dol', den."

"You'll take three or nothing if you want to do business with me," replied Joe, resolutely.

"All-a right. I tak-a da t'ree."

While this bargaining was going on the other two members of the Bosko family were watching proceedings from the back of the store.

As Joe produced his pocket-book, the villainous-looking woman and her shifty-eyed son came forward, as if in obedience to some signal.

Then the dealer himself sprang at the boy and tried to wrest the wallet from his grasp.

Fanwood, however, was too quick for him, and threw his hand containing the pocketbook out at full length.

At the same time he grasped the Italian's arm and tried to push him away.

While he was thus employed the woman endeavored to creep behind him for the purpose of reaching the wallet, while the hard-looking youngster came to his father's assistance.

It was clear that the fat-looking pocketbook had tempt-

ed them, though it did not begin to contain the money they thought it did, being bloated up with letters and circulars he had received from several firms he had communicated with.

Because Fanwood was a boy Bosko fancied he would prove an easy mark.

That's where he made a mistake.

Joe was strong, wiry, and quite an athlete.

As soon as he saw the tactics of the enemy he began to back toward the door.

The dealer, foreseeing trouble if he got away now, endeavored to detain him, and hurriedly uttered some words in Italian to his wife, who hastened to block his exit.

"What are you trying to do, anyway? Rob me?" demanded Joe, breaking away from Bosko.

He thrust the wallet into his pocket, and pushing the woman back started for the front of the store.

He didn't get there, however, for young Petro Bosko grabbed up a heavy bronze ornament and threw it at his head.

Joe threw out his hands mechanically to save himself.

Then everything grew black before his eyes as his senses left him, and he fell at full length upon the floor unconscious.

CHAPTER X.

PLANNING A ROBBERY.

When Joe came to his senses again he found himself in a dark and ill-smelling place.

His limbs were not fettered in any way, but he soon found that his movements were cramped by the narrowness of his prison pen.

It was some little time before he realized just what had happened to him.

When he did he was thoroughly disgusted and angry over the situation.

He examined his pockets and found that his wallet, and every penny of his loose change had been taken from him.

"Just wait till I get out of this and I'll make it mighty hot for that scoundrel," he muttered between his teeth. "What did he take me for? A stranger and an easy mark? I guess he imagines because I'm a boy that he isn't taking any great chances. He'll find out his mistake sooner than he bargained for."

Joe found his match-safe in his pocket, and he lit a lucifer in order to examine his surroundings.

It was evidently a boxed-off corner of a cellar, probably under the second-hand store.

"Now that they've put me down here I wonder what they propose to do with me?" he said to himself.

Of course, he couldn't tell what their intentions were, but they couldn't be otherwise than hostile toward himself.

Lighting a second match he found there was a wooden door, secured by a hasp on the other side.

There were several knot-holes through which he tried to see what the rest of the cellar looked like, but was unable on account of the darkness which shrouded the place.

He experimented with the hasp, but found that it appeared to be held by a padlock.

There was no other way of getting out of his pen unless he could kick the boards down, and they appeared to be too strong for him to accomplish that.

So he sat down on the edge of the old mattress on which he had been lying to think things over.

He noticed now that his head pained him a good bit, and putting up his hand found that he had received a jagged wound from some heavy, ragged object that had drawn the blood which had dried around the cut.

"The young chap must have done that to me," mused Joe. "I'd like to have my hands on him now; I'd make him do a song-and-dance he wouldn't like."

At this point in his meditations he heard a noise as if some person was coming into the cellar.

He listened, and found that there were two men descending a short stairway into the place.

One carried a lighted candle in a candlestick.

Joe looked through a convenient knot-hole and got a good view of them.

The man who had the candle in his fingers was short and thick-set in stature, with a hard and villainous look on his coarse features.

His companion, to Joe's great surprise, was Pat Flynn.

He looked disreputable and dissipated, and his red eyes and washed-out look showed he had only just recovered from a debauch.

"Come this way," said his associate roughly.

The fellow led Flynn over to a corner near Joe's pen, and squatting down, laid the candlestick on the floor.

"Sit down. We can talk here without anyone hearing us."

Flynn complied with the other's request, but his eyes roved restlessly around, as if trying to pierce the darkness.

"Now, Flynn, let's talk business. You say you've got the lay of Major Pond's apartments in the academy building, eh?"

"Yes, I have," replied Flynn, in a surly tone.

"Well and good. Now, what sort of stuff does he keep around loose? Is it worth the risk of liftin'?"

"Sure it is, faith. He has a lot of brickybrack that he thinks a heap of, so he does. Then there's the safe in his office where he kapes his money. If you've the tools to open it wid, we ought to make a haul."

"He wouldn't be likely to keep much money around the house," said his companion.

"Thot may be roight, ginerally spakin'. But, faith, he always has a wad around the first of the month—that's to-morrow—to pay off wid."

"How do you know he has?"

"Sure, haven't I seen it whin I wint in to get me wages?"

"What's the easiest way to get into the building?"

"Through a little soide dure near the kitchen. I've got a key to it."

"You have, eh?" exclaimed the other, with a show of interest.

"Faith, I have," with a cunning look.

"How did you get hold of it?"

"I sthole it, so I did."

"The major's office is on the first floor, I suppose?"

"It is, nixt to the sittin'-room, and overlookin' the parade ground."

"What else is there on that floor?"

"Class-rooms."

"Where does the major and his daughter live?"

"On the second flure, above the sittin'-room and office, at the kitchen ind of the buildin'. The main stairs go up through the middle of the house. The class-rooms are all on one soide of the buildin'."

"What rooms are above the major's apartments?"

"Thim are the slapin' rooms of the tachers."

"To get to the major's rooms you have to go up the main stairs, don't you?"

"No. There is a private back stairway to the dinin'-room where Major Pond and his daughter ate. It runs out of the passage-way nixt the kitchen. It's the key to the passage-way dure thot I have."

"Where do the boys sleep?"

"In their quarters at the other soide of the parade ground."

"Do they keep a sentry guard at night?"

"No; but there's a watchman thot goes over the place every half-hour, and rings up an electric clock so as to show thot he's attendin' to his duty."

"I guess we could muzzle him all right."

"Shure, you could do thot aisy."

"If I go into this thing with you how do we divide? I should want two-thirds of the boodle, as you don't understand the business, while I do."

"I'll agree to thot. I'll be satisfied wid one-third and me revenge on the major for givin' me the bounce from the place. I thried to do up his daughter the same day he discharged me, but one of the b'ys came along on his bicycle and saved her."

"What did you try to do to her?"

"I froightened her pony, and it ran away wid her. I ex-picted the little mare would throw her, but she saved herself by elingin' to her nick. Then the b'y, bad cess to him for a butter-in! chased the animal and caught her down by the railroad jist as a thrain come along. It would have done me good if she'd broke her nick—not thot I've anythin' ag'in her, do yez moind; but it would have hit her ould man in a tinder place, and I'd have had me revinge thin."

His vindictive tone attracted the notice of even the ruf-fian by his side, who remarked, with a short laugh:

"You seem to be a bad man to monkey with, Flynn."

"I niver forgit an injury."

Joe, listening to this conversation at a nearby knot-hole, shook his fist at the Irish rascal.

"It won't be my fault if I don't get you in jail before you're many hours older, Mr. Flynn," he muttered.

"Well, Flynn," continued his companion, "as I've noth-lifted in New York and that neighborhood, sold to Bosko's will take the stuff off our hands at a fair valuation and ship it off to his brother in New York, so that none of it will be found here. Bosko is a sly chap. Many a crook in these parts has cashed in his pickings at Bosko's, and no one has been the wiser. The police haven't the least suspicions of the real character of Bosko's curiosity shop."

"You mane it's a fince, is thot it?"

"That's what it is. Half the stuff he has for sale was lifted in New York and that neighborhood, sold to Bosko's brother, who has just such another store on Third avenue, New York, and by him shipped out here to be disposed of. They play into each other's hands in great shape."

"It's a wonder the New York chap isn't caught, at any rate. They have some fly cops in thot town."

"I don't advise you to go to New York, Flynn. You're likely to find yourself on the Island, if not up the river, before you know what struck you. I stay away myself on general principles. Towns like Maplewood are easier to work, though they don't always pan out as well as a feller could wish. I hope the academy will meet my expectations, for I'd like to go to Chicago with somethin' in my clothes."

"If we kin get away wid all the stuff we'll foind there yez won't have any kick comin'."

"I have to take your word for that, Flynn; but I'll allow you ought to know somethin' about it. You meet me at the Pikers' Rest on the trolley road at nine to-night, and we'll start the ball rollin'."

"Faith I'll be there widout fail," agreed the Irishman.

"I'll fetch my tools for goin' into the safe, and a couple of sacks to carry off the swag in. Have you a barker?"

"A barker is it? What's thot?"

"A revolver, you chump."

"No. I wish I had."

"I'll get one for you from Bosko as we go out. He'll charge it up to you."

"He's welcome to do thot," grinned the rascal.

"Then come along. Let's be goin'."

Bill Bagley took up the bit of candle, nearly burned out by this time, and led the way to the regions above, Flynn following close at his heels.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW JOE GOT OUT OF THE CELLAR.

For some moments after the departure of the rascals Joe stood by the knot-hole like one in a dream.

He was fairly staggered by what he had overheard.

Pat Flynn in some way had got acquainted with the crook Bagley, and had proposed the scheme of robbing Major Pond's apartments at the academy.

They had come down to the cellar to talk the matter over where they thought they would not be overheard, and within earshot of Joe had practically arranged to pull the affair off that night.

How could he prevent them from carrying out their nefarious project?

There was no possible way unless he could escape from the cellar, and there seemed very little chance of his doing that.

While he was thinking the matter over, he heard a noise again on the stairs in the corner.

Looking through the knot-hole that commanded the steps he saw the young Italian who had knocked him out coming down with a lighted candle in one hand and a plate and jug in the other.

His mission seemed tolerably clear.

Joe decided to pretend he had not yet come to his senses, so he threw himself on the mattress and began to breathe hard.

Petro Bosko stopped at the door and listened intently.

Then he opened a small slide and flashed the light inside.

He saw Joe stretched out on the mattress, apparently unconscious.

The sight reassured him.

He put down the plate and jug, and turned his attention to the padlock, which he opened with the key he carried.

While he was doing this Joe sprang from the mattress and crouched near the door ready to pounce upon him the moment the door was opened.

He had not long to wait.

Petro pulled the door open about half way, then stooped to pick up the plate and jug.

Before he could do it Joe had him by the throat and pulled him into the small pen where he forced him down upon the mattress, and stuffed his mouth full of straw when he opened it to give a yell.

Pulling a red handkerchief from the young Italian's pocket he bound his hands securely behind his back, and then tearing strips from the mattress, bound his legs together, and gagged him more effectually.

Then, placing the plate of meat and bread, and the jug of water, inside the pen, he shut the door, locked the padlock, and put the key in his pocket.

"Now to make my escape from this cellar," he breathed. "I wish I could do it without going through the store and thus alarming Bosko himself. I don't want him to make his escape before I can warn the police of his true character, and have him arrested."

He tip-toed up the stairs and found the door leading to the kitchen at the back of the living rooms in the rear of the store ajar.

There was no one in the room.

He glanced through the dirty window and saw that it

was growing dark outside, from which circumstance he knew he must have been several hours a prisoner in the cellar.

He looked into the adjoining room and saw it was used as a bedroom.

Crossing it, he found that the door communicated with the store.

Looking in he saw the elder Bosko sitting at the front entrance smoking, while his wife was seated opposite to him.

After figuring on the situation, Joe returned to the kitchen, opened the door, and looked out into the yard—a small and very dirty one.

The fence seemed to form part of a narrow alleyway, so the boy hastily scaled it and dropped down on the other side.

"Free at last!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "Now for the police station."

Making his way out into a back street, he proceeded to inquire his way to that building, which was several blocks away.

Arriving there he told his story to the officer in charge, and handed over the key to the pen in which he had been confined.

Three officers were at once detailed to arrest the whole Bosko family and close the shop.

"You'll notify the New York police by telegraph about Bosko's brother and his shop on Third avenue, won't you?" asked Joe.

"That will be done as soon as the charge you've made against Dominico Bosko is fully established, and we have positive evidence to prove that his shop has been used as a blind to receive stolen goods."

"Well, if you send officers to the Pikers' Rest before nine o'clock to-night and arrest that crook, who calls himself Bill Bagley, and his rascally associate, Pat Flynn, you ought to be able to secure the evidence you want by turning the screws on Bagley. I guess he'll turn State's evidence against the Boskos to save himself."

"We can only arrest them as suspicious characters as the case stands. Whatever you may testify to in court will be denied by them, and without corroborative evidence the judge won't be able to hold them. Now I have a better plan," said the officer.

"What is it?" asked Joe.

"You say they have decided to burglarize the apartments of the principal of the military academy?"

"They have."

"Very good. I will send a couple of officers out there for the purpose of catching them in the act. I shall want you to go with them, as you will be able to identify the rascals."

"I'm willing to go."

"Then report here as soon as you've had something to eat. That will be about eight o'clock. I expect to have the Boskos brought here shortly, and will lock them up until to-morrow morning, when they will be brought be-

fore the police magistrate for examination. By that time I hope to be able to substantiate the evidence you will bring against them. We will try to get them a long term in the State prison."

"I'll eat at a restaurant on Decatur street, just around the corner, and be back here in half an hour," said Joe, rising from his chair. "And that reminds me that I haven't a cent. The Boskos cleaned me out of about ten dollars, all I had, so I shall have to ask you to lend me half a dollar until I can return it to you."

"You're welcome to a dollar," said the officer in charge of the station, handing Joe a bill.

The boy thanked him for the loan and immediately hastened to the restaurant he had mentioned, feeling hungry enough to do justice to a reasonably square meal.

CHAPTER XII.

TRAPPING A PAIR OF RASCALS.

At eight o'clock Joe was back at the police station awaiting the pleasure of the officers in charge.

The Boskos—father, mother and son—were already occupying a cell in the basement of the building, and Joe was informed of that fact.

At half-past eight two of the policemen who had officiated at the arrest of the Italian second-hand dealer and his interesting family were detailed to accompany Fanwood to the academy.

They received their orders, Joe himself had a short talk with the chief officer, and then the three left the station, walked to the corner of the street, hailed a trolley going in the direction they were bound, and boarding it, settled themselves for a seven-mile ride.

They reached their destination in fifty minutes, after walking a long block from the road traversed by the trolley.

From the street the academy looked to be wrapped in silence and darkness.

Even the tutors, who were not restricted as to their hour of retirement, appeared to have gone to rest, for there was not a light in any of their windows.

The students, who were on the verge of examination week, and would soon be scattering to their various homes, were in bed, and, presumably, sound asleep.

Up the gravel walk, and between the pair of frowning field pieces, one of which had played so important a part in Fanwood's and Hostler Flynn's retirement from the school, walked Joe and the two policemen.

The boy laid his hand on the electric button marked "Visitors' Bell" and pushed it.

A gong somewhere near the kitchen end of the building responded.

Major Pond was in his office at the time, arranging a pile of examination papers, and the ring, so unusual at that late hour, brought him to his feet.

As the servants had all retired, he answered the summons himself.

He unbolted, unlocked and threw open the front door.

"Who is there?" he asked.

"It is I, Joe Fanwood," replied the boy, stepping into the light of the hall gas jet, which the major had turned up.

"Why, Fanwood!" exclaimed the astonished principal. "Is it really you, and at this hour of the night? What's the trouble?" and his glance took in the uniformed officers of the law who stood at the lad's back.

"We'll give you the full particulars regarding our visit if you will permit us to follow you to your office," replied Joe.

"Walk right in, then," invited the major, who, after their entrance, relocked the door and led his three visitors down a corridor and ushered them into his brightly lighted private office on the ground floor.

"Take a seat, gentlemen," he said, waving his hand toward chairs. "Now, Fanwood, I am ready to learn the meaning of this rather surprising visit. The presence of a couple of policemen with you gives a serious look to it."

"Yes, sir. It certainly is a serious matter that has brought us down here. We are here to protect your property against a couple of men who have planned to rob you to-night and to capture the rascals in the midst of their work."

"What's that?" exclaimed the amazed principal. "Two men, you say, have planned to rob me to-night?"

"Yes, sir. One of them you know, as he was for some time in your employ."

"Indeed! His name, please."

"Patrick Flynn."

"The scoundrel that nearly caused my daughter's death!" ejaculated the major in an angry tone.

"Yes, sir."

"If I can only lay my hands on him I'll make him pay dearly for that outrage."

"We hope to catch him here to-night. He has in his possession a key to the back entry of this building."

"He has, eh? I remember now the key was missed, and we had to replace it with a new one. So it seems the rascal took it for a purpose."

"The lock itself was not changed, then, sir?"

"It was not."

"Then by using the stolen key Flynn and his companion will be able to enter the building?"

"Certainly. If we don't prevent them."

"Our instructions are to permit Flynn and the other chap, who is a professional crook named Bagley, to get inside without molestation. They are to be allowed to commence their work so that we can catch them in a way that will establish their guilt past any reasonable doubt."

"I see," nodded the major. "Now, Fanwood, will you explain to me how the knowledge of this proposed burglary came to your attention and that of the Maplewood police?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Joe, who immediately told Major Pond of his adventure in Dominico Bosko's second-hand store on Bainbridge street, and his subsequent ex-

periences in the cellar, where he had overheard the two rascals discussing their burglarious project.

"You had rather a strenuous time of it, Fanwood," said Major Pond, with a smile.

"I'm not anxious to repeat it, sir," grinned Joe.

"Have those Italians been arrested?"

"Yes, sir. They will be brought before the police magistrate in the morning."

"Good. They will probably get their just deserts."

"I hope they will."

"Now let us talk about our own business. When do you think these men will make their appearance out here?"

"They were to meet at a drinking saloon called the Pikers' Rest, on the Trolley road, at nine o'clock. I shouldn't think they'd come out here until after midnight."

"It is now after ten. It is probable that they will commence operations in this room where my safe is, so we had better arrange to capture them here."

"Yes, sir. Flynn told Bagley that you always had a considerable amount of cash in the safe around the first of the month to pay off with."

"If Flynn knew his prayers as well as he professes to be acquainted with my business he would be in less danger of spending a portion of his life behind the prison bars," snorted the major.

"That's right, sir."

"Well, officers, if you will permit me to offer you a suggestion as to a plan for catching those rascals, I would say that that closet yonder offers an admirable place of concealment for one of you. Then, by changing the position of my desk temporarily around in front of this window, a nook will be made of sufficient size to hold the other. Fanwood, take this revolver, and when the time comes, crawl under the lounge near the safe. As for myself, I will get another revolver that I keep upstairs, and keep somewhere in the background until the critical moment when I will take a hand in the affair and help you secure the villains."

The major's suggestions met with the approval of the policemen, and were adopted later on when the light was extinguished and the trap set for the unsuspecting rascals to walk into.

Joe kept watch from one of the kitchen windows for the approach of the men they were expecting.

This window commanded a view of the entry door to which Flynn had the stolen key, and which naturally would be the first point aimed at by him and his companion.

One o'clock chimed from the mantel time-piece in the major's study, and still there was no sign of the burglars.

At quarter past one Joe caught sight of two shadows coming around the corner of the kitchen and slouching toward the entry door.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Here they come at last."

He rushed into the office, gave the warning to Major

Pond and the two policemen, and then, revolver in hand, crawled under the lounge.

It seemed scarcely any time after that when the soft footfalls of the rascals were heard approaching the room.

Flynn was leading the way with a bull's eye dark lantern, and Bill Bagley, with his bag of tools, was at his heels.

"Is this the office?" whispered the crook to Flynn.

"Faith, it is."

"Give me the glim."

The professional flashed the ball of light over every object in the room until it rested on the small safe near the desk.

"Now go to the door and keep watch," ordered Bagley, authoritatively.

Flynn obeyed.

Left to himself, the crook dropped on his knees before the safe and examined its construction carefully by the aid of the lantern.

He was heard to utter a grunt of satisfaction, which seemed to indicate that he did not consider the safe a hard proposition to get around.

Pulling one of the rugs toward him, he softly emptied the tools upon it and began operations, after placing the lantern in such a position that the disc of light would shine directly upon the spot he meant to drill.

The officers were in their stocking feet, and the crisis being at hand, the man watching from the closet door came out and crossed as noiselessly as a shadow to his companion behind the desk.

This was one of the signals agreed upon, and the officer back of the desk accordingly crept out, revolver in hand, and covered the unsuspecting Bagley, while the other suddenly turned up the gas, which had been turned down to the merest hair of light.

The glare of light startled the crook, who was in the act of giving the first turn to the drill, and he turned around.

"Surrender, you rascal!" cried the officer with the revolver. "We've got you dead to rights!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A BAG OF GOLD.

With an oath Bagley dropped the drill, sprang to his feet and put his hand to his hip pocket, where he carried his own shooter.

"If you attempt to draw your gun I'll shoot you down like a dog," said the officer, sternly.

The crook saw that the game was up with him, and he sullenly withdrew his hand.

"You've got the drop on me," he remarked, with an ugly look, "so I give up."

By that time Joe had extricated himself from under the lounge, and he stepped up and also covered Bagley with his weapon.

This gave the policeman the chance to slip a pair of handcuffs on the crook.

In the meantime Major Pond and the other officer easily overpowered Flynn in the passage, and the night's work was practically over.

Flynn was led into the office, where his companion stood with his pair of steel bracelets on, a duplicate of which ornamented the Irishman's wrists.

Joe saw that it was as much as the major could do to restrain himself from laying violent hands on the recreant hostler.

"You infernal scoundrel!" roared the ex-army officer, his face blazing with suppressed passion. "Not content with making a dastardly attempt on my daughter's life, nothing would do you but you must conspire with another rascal to rob me. But I will prosecute you to the furthest limit of the law, and see that you go where it will be out of your power to do any more damage for many a long day."

Flynn cowed under the major's scathing denunciation. His undoing had come so unexpectedly upon him that he was fairly paralyzed.

He hadn't a word to say, but shrunk back like a whipped dog.

"Well, Major Pond," said one of the officers, "there is no reason why we should remain here any longer now that we have secured the men we came after. We will take them back to town on a trolley car and lock them up."

"I am very much obliged to both of you, officers, as well as to my young friend, Joe Fanwood, for the service you have all rendered me this night. I shall not forget to remember you in some suitable manner as soon as these rascals have been convicted and put away. For the present permit me to offer you a glass of good wine," he concluded, taking a bottle and three glasses from a wall cupboard and waving to the officers to fill up.

The third glass was not intended for Joe, but for the major himself.

After the three men had drank one another's health, the prisoners were marched out of the academy, Joe bringing up in the rear with the revolver which Major Pond told him to retain until Sunday, when he hoped to see the boy at dinner.

They had to wait nearly half an hour for a car to take them to Maplewood, but at last one came along.

There was only one passenger on board, and he, as well as the motorman and the conductor, was astonished to see the officers with the two handcuffed men.

An hour later Flynn and Bagley were under lock and key at the station, and then Joe went to his lodgings to take a much-needed rest.

Whatever it was the chief officer of the Maplewood police said to Bagley next morning, certain it is he went on the stand and testified against Dominico Bosko when the Italians were brought up for examination before the magistrate.

Subsequently the Boskos were tried and got the full penalty of the law, and their shop was put out of business.

Flynn was tried and convicted on the single count of

burglary, and Major Pond used his influence to get him the limit.

The second charge against him of a murderous attempt on Bessie Pond's life was held over Flynn's head until he should be discharged from the State prison, when he was to be at once rearrested and brought to book on that count.

Bagley pleaded guilty, and, in consideration of turning State's evidence against the Boskos, was let off with a light sentence.

Bosko's brother in New York was arrested on evidence furnished by the Maplewood police, his store was broken up, and he was tried and sent to Sing Sing for a number of years.

Thus the Bosko family's little game that they played upon Joe Fanwood had wide-spreading results, and the community was greatly benefited thereby.

In the meantime Joe got his samples from Cincinnati and started out to do business with them.

He succeeded very well from the start, as they were a novelty in Maplewood, and the result was he made good money as the commission allowed was liberal.

He liked this work so well that by the time he had drummed up all the town he paid visits to neighboring towns, where he did quite as well.

The academy vacation of ten weeks was now on, but until Major Pond and Bessie left for their own outing at the seashore, Joe was a more frequent visitor than ever at the school.

With Bessie's departure Joe felt decidedly lonesome, and his work seemed harder.

Still he had Bob Stewart's society as a partial compensation, for Bob's home was on the outskirts of Maplewood, and the two boys had many a good time together.

Bob's father was the most prominent physician in that neighborhood.

Joe wrote occasionally to his guardian, telling him how well he was getting along at his business.

Mr. Jessup always answered his letters, praising the boy for his smartness, but never failed to wind up with the earnest suggestion that Joe ought to return to the military academy when the next term commenced.

Fanwood never thought of practical joking these days, as he was too much interested in making money, and Bob Stewart was chary about getting him started again at his old tricks.

Before he gave up the advertising business, Joe had his hooks out for something else to take its place.

He had about \$1,000 in the bank, all but the \$50 sent him by Mr. Jessup having been made by his own exertions—a very fine showing by so young and inexperienced a boy.

One morning while reading the Maplewood Record in his office before starting out for the day he noticed an advertisement of a certain builder calling for several thousand feet of second-hand boards.

Only the day before Joe had seen a sign on an old build-

ing of three stories offering the structure for sale, subject to immediate removal, for \$50.

It struck him that here was a chance for a speculation.

Accordingly he went out and hunted up the owner of the house and offered him \$10 on account, agreeing to have the building taken down at once and the wood removed or forfeit the money.

Having secured this option, he went around to the builder's office and told him that he had just bought an old house and that if the timber would answer his purpose he would sell him the house just as it stood for \$100, or he would have the house demolished at his own cost and deliver the wood wherever the builder wanted within the town limits for \$200.

"The latter is the only way I would do business with you, young man," said the builder. "I'll go around with you and size up your building. It may or may not pay me to accept your offer."

So they went around to the house together.

After the builder had thoroughly examined the building he told Joe he would close the bargain on his guarantee to deliver every foot of material, except the brick foundation, at a certain specified price.

"I can use the doors and window frames, and that is the chief reason I am willing to close with you. See that the windows are not broken when taken out or in transit, or I shall hold you responsible for any damage to them, and will make a deduction from the agreed amount."

He then paid Joe \$50 on account, and the boy started to get men and a team to take the building down and cart the material to the builder's.

After he had paid the owner the \$40 that was due him he started the men at work under his own supervision pulling the building to pieces.

They began on the roof, of course, and worked downward.

After demolishing the roof and the third story work stopped for that day.

To prevent the encroaches of mischievous boys or tramps Fanwood hired a man for \$1.50 to remain on watch until work was resumed next morning.

Next day the second story was pulled to pieces.

It was about eleven o'clock that one of the men began ripping up the flooring in one corner of a room where a closet had just been removed.

Joe casually stepped over to see that he did not split the boards, but took them up whole.

In the midst of his work the man went downstairs to get a drink of water, and Joe started in to take up a few of the boards while he was absent.

After detaching two boards the boy found several short boards that were loose.

He took hold of them, one after the other, and they came away easily in his hands.

Underneath these boards, and between two of the heavy floor timbers, he saw a dust-covered bag lying in the corner.

He reached down his arm and lifted the bag out.

It felt uncommonly heavy.

Shaking it, he heard a peculiar metallic sound.

This excited his curiosity and he quickly untied the mouth of the bag and then looked inside.

He saw that the bag was about two-thirds full of gold coins.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW JOE ACCUMULATED \$6,500 IN THREE MONTHS.

"Great Stars!" exclaimed Joe, staring at the money as though hardly crediting the evidence of his senses. "Is this real money or is it——"

He shoved his hand in and grasped a bunch of the stuff.

"It is real money as sure as I'm alive!" he cried, joyfully, as he examined the coins he drew out and then let them trickle back among the rest. "Gee whiz! What a find! There must be many hundred dollars' worth here. It's better to be born lucky than rich anyhow."

The discovery of the bag of gold caused Joe to lose all interest in the demolition of the old building.

Telling his men to work carefully while he was away, he started for his office with his bag of treasure.

Locking himself in his office, he dumped the money out on his desk, and found that it consisted of a mixture of \$5, \$10 and \$20 gold pieces.

From the condition of the bag and the moldy appearance of the edges of many of the coins, Joe judged that the bag of money must have remained untouched in that hole a good many years.

"I wonder who it could have belonged to?" he mused, as he stacked the coins up in piles according to their denomination. "He must be dead, or surely he wouldn't have left this money so long in that hiding place. At that rate I made the speculation of my life when I bought that ancient building for \$50. The former owner would certainly feel like kicking himself around the block if he knew that I found all these coins in that house."

Joe now proceeded to count the money, and the sum total of all the coins amounted to \$5,375.

"Well, if this isn't a dandy haul I don't know what a dandy haul is, that's all," he breathed in great glee. "I'll have to start a new bank account, for the Maplewood Savings won't accept an account of over \$3,000. I'll just put the overplus into the New Era."

He cleaned the mold off the tarnished coins, and, putting \$2,000 in one pocket, and the balance back into the bag, he started for the Maplewood Savings Bank.

The \$2,000 filled his limit at that bank, so as soon as the entry had been made he went to the New Era in the next block.

He discovered that the New Era's limit was also \$3,000, which left him with a balance of \$375.

This necessitated opening a third account, and the Bee Hive, on Decatur street, accommodated him.

Having disposed of his money to his satisfaction, Joe

returned to the old house to see how his men were getting on.

They were resting and eating their dinners, for it was between twelve and one.

"I might as well eat, too," thought the boy; "though, to tell the truth, I think the discovery of all that money has taken my appetite away."

He sought a restaurant just the same, and managed to worry down a pretty respectable meal.

On returning to the building once more he found that the men had resumed work on the second floor, now nearly pulled to pieces.

The former owner was also standing around watching the progress of operations.

He nodded to Joe.

"What are you doing with all this material?" he asked, curiously.

"I sold it to a builder on Dale street."

"How will you come out on your spec.?"

"I've got no kick coming," grinned the boy.

"I guess you knew what you were doing when you bought the old rookery. You look like a pretty smart boy."

"Thanks. I generally know what I'm doing. By the way, who lived in that place last?"

"Who lived there? Nobody for several years. It was vacant when I bought the building and ground three years ago. It was at one time known as the Paul Jones Tavern. When business moved up toward Perry and Decatur streets its former prosperity dwindled to the dogs. That room on the second floor your men have just finished tearing out was for a long time occupied by a curious-looking little old man, said to have been quite wealthy, named Andrew Davis. He was found dead in bed about five years ago, and as nobody claimed his body, he was buried by the town. As he never received any letters, it is not believed he had any relatives, at least any that the old man cared for. If he had money in bank, it will likely remain there for all time now."

Thus speaking, the former owner strolled away in blissful ignorance of the fact that the boy he was talking to could have thrown a flood of light upon the finances of the dead Andrew Davis.

Next day Joe completed the tearing down of the wooden structure.

He then sold the brick foundation, just as it stood, to a man for \$15.

His profit on the speculation was \$125, plus \$5,375 that he found in the bag, making a total profit of \$5,500, thus raising his capital to \$6,500.

That week ended his hustling for the Cincinnati firm, and he then took up a new water-proof house paint.

To introduce this he was provided with a book of samples showing the different colors as they looked upon various kinds of wood.

He didn't meet with much luck when he went around among the paint stores, but he did much better soon as

he began to canvas the painters themselves, and subsequently the farmers for miles around.

Joe for strong reasons wanted to stand well with the charming Bessie, and she had expressed a very decided wish at their last interview that he should come back to the academy in the fall. If he did not do so he could at least live near it so he could see her often.

He felt that she would be very much disappointed if he did not, and this fact had a great deal to do with his ultimate decision of staying near the academy.

One day about the middle of August Bob Stewart, who had been away two weeks at a seaside resort, met Joe on the outskirts of the town with his bundle of samples of paints under his arm.

"Hello, old chap," he exclaimed, shaking him by the hand, "what are you doing on the suburbs with that bundle on such a hot day?"

"Oh, I'm out for business as usual," grinned Fanwood.

"You look it all right," laughed his friend, mopping his forehead. "You've been hustling for over three months now. Aren't you tired of it yet?"

"Not a little bit. I like the fun of building up bank accounts."

"How many have you got now?" asked Stewart in a joking way.

"Three."

"Three! Oh, come now, you're giving me taffy."

"Not a bit of it. I have accounts at the Maplewood, the New Era and the Bee Hive."

"The dickens you have. How much in each? A hundred?"

"You're a very poor guesser, Bob."

"Well, \$200 then?"

"You're away off."

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me yourself?"

"You wouldn't believe me unless I showed you the pass books, and I haven't got them with me."

"Oh, I'll believe you."

"I'll see whether you will or not. I've \$3,000 each in the Maplewood and New Era, and \$725 in the Bee Hive."

Bob stared fixedly at his chum.

"This isn't one of your old-time jokes, is it?" he asked, incredulously.

"No. I've given up joking for good. Making money is a serious business."

"Do you mean to say that you've made all that yourself in three months? Why, my father don't make that in a year, and I guess he makes more money than any other doctor in Maplewood."

"Well, Bob, all I can say is that I had a \$10 bill when I left the academy that morning and my guardian afterward sent me a draft for \$50. The rest of the money I have accumulated myself."

"I don't see how you could make so much selling things on commission."

"I didn't say that I made it all that way."

"What other way could you make it?" persisted Bob.

"Look here, Bob, can you keep a secret?"

"Sure I can."

"Then I'll let a little light on the subject into your brain pan. Did you ever hear of the Paul Jones Tavern?"

"Sure I did. It is down on Shipley street—a closed-up wreck. Went out of business about three years ago."

"You've got it right except that it isn't there any more."

"Isn't it? Torn down, eh?"

"Yes. I tore it down."

"You? Oh, come off! What are you giving me?"

"Facts. I bought the building for \$50. It cost me about \$40 to have it pulled apart. I sold the material to a builder for \$200, and the brick foundation to another man for \$15, and cleared altogether, \$5,500."

"You cleared how much?"

"Five thousand, five hundred dollars."

"Say, Joe, you could give Baron Munchausen points and never turn a hair," grinned Bob.

"How so?"

"Why, you say you bought the building for \$50, and it cost you \$40 to tear it down. That's \$90. You sold the wood for \$200 and the foundation for \$15. That's \$215. The difference between \$90 and \$215 is exactly \$125, isn't it? Yet you say you cleared \$5,500. How do you figure it out?"

"That's the secret I want you to keep."

"How can I keep it unless you tell it to me?"

"I'm going to do so. Listen."

Whereupon he confided to his chum his discovery of the bag of gold that he had found in the second-story room of the old tavern.

"Well, if that isn't hog luck I don't know what to call it," was Bob's comment.

CHAPTER XV.

BUSINESS AND PLEASURE.

Bob invited Joe to take lunch with him that day, and he accepted the invitation.

Dr. Stewart was present at the meal, and he asked Fanwood how he was getting on.

"Fine," replied Joe.

"I'm glad to hear it," replied the physician. "I like to see boys succeed in what they undertake. But aren't you going to finish your schooling before you get down to business for good?"

"No, sir; I am through my schooling."

"What have you been doing since you started out for yourself?"

Joe gave him an outline of his operations.

"You say you are selling waterproof paint now, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Would you like to see my samples? I have them with me."

"I should like to look at them very much."

After the meal Joe displayed his samples, and dis-

coursed upon the superiority of the paint just as if he was trying to get a customer for them.

"You can furnish a guarantee from the manufacturer that the paint will do all that is claimed for it, can you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I am going to have my house painted. John, my gardener and man-of-all-work, is a good painter. He will do the work. I will buy the paint from you. Could you form any idea how much paint I shall require to give the building two coats?"

"Yes, sir. All I have to do is to take a few measurements, and make a calculation with the help of this table in the back of the book. That will give me the approximate amount you will need. All you will have to do is to select the color that you prefer, and if the results are not thoroughly satisfactory you needn't pay for the paint."

"Well, that is fair enough," replied Dr. Stewart, with a smile. "I accept your terms. Go ahead and make your calculations and order the paint."

The physician, after consulting with his wife, picked out a certain color, and Joe registered the order in his book.

The paint was duly delivered, and applied by John to the house.

It turned out to be quite satisfactory, and Joe received the doctor's check for the paint.

Two weeks before the academy opened for the next term Major Pond and Bessie returned from the mountains, where they had gone after a month's sojourn at the seashore.

Joe had corresponded regularly with Miss Pond, and he knew the day they were to arrive at Maplewood, consequently he was on hand when the train came in.

"You're looking extremely well, Miss Bessie," exclaimed Joe, grasping the girl's hand as she stepped from the cars. "You're as brown as a berry."

"Am I?" she laughed. "You look kind of dark yourself."

"Oh, I've been out in the sun a good deal during the hot spell."

"I suppose you have, you busy boy. Well, I'm awfully glad to see you again."

"Same here, Bessie. You and your father must dine with me at the Argyle."

"At the Argyle! My goodness! Aren't we tony!" she smiled. "You must have been making a lot of money."

"Sure I have. Loads of it," with a grin.

The major, who had rushed off to attend to the transportation of the trunks to the academy, now came up and shook hands with Joe.

"You don't look as if work disagreed with you, Fanwood," said Major Pond, looking the boy over critically.

"I hope not, sir. At any rate, I feel like a bird."

"Papa," interposed Bessie, with a mischievous laugh, "Mr. Fanwood wants us to dine with him at the Argyle. Shall we accept?"

"At the Argyle, eh?" replied the major. "You've picked out the most expensive place in town, young man."

"Well, sir, when I invite my friends to dine I like to take them to a nice place. The Argyle about fills the bill in my opinion. It is a select, quiet restaurant. I hope you will permit me the honor of entertaining you and Miss Bessie there, sir."

"Certainly, if you insist, Fanwood. You have been doing pretty well, I believe, in your business."

"First class."

They took an electric car, which landed them in front of the Argyle.

During the meal Major Pond asked more particularly about Joe's short business career, and was much astonished at his success.

"I always thought you was a smart boy, Fanwood, and now I'm sure you'll make your mark when you grow older."

Joe staggered the major when he told him he had nearly \$7,000 in bank.

"Seven thousand dollars! Why—why, how——"

"Let me explain how I came by the bulk of it," said the boy, and he related how he had found the bag of money in the old tavern.

Major Pond whistled.

As for Bessie, she regarded Joe with pleased surprise.

"Evidently you have landed in Lucky Street with both feet," said the major. "Are you coming back to see us at the academy when we open?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good!" exclaimed the ex-army officer, in a pleased tone, while Bessie clapped her hands with delight, and her eyes sparkled. "I was afraid your business success might carry you off your feet. You have a good education now. It is a grave mistake for any boy to miss the advantages of a good education when the chance to get it is his. The better one is mentally equipped when he starts out in the world, the better his chance of success, other things being equal, of course. That's why you are succeeding."

Major Pond invited Joe to dine with him and Bessie on the coming Sunday, and the boy gladly accepted the invitation.

On Friday morning he received a note from the major asking him to come out to the academy and bring his samples of paints with him.

"I guess he's going to give me an order," chuckled the lad.

He went out to the school about two o'clock, and was shown into the office.

"I'm going to repaint the dormitory buildings, the stable, gymnasium, and other out-houses, and if your paint strikes my views I'll give you quite an order," said the ex-army officer.

"I am sure you'll find it the best on the market," replied Joe, unfolding his samples and proceeding to talk up the advantages of the waterproof article in which he was interested.

Major Pond was really anxious to do Fanwood a service, and as the paint seemed to be just what he wanted, he gave Joe the order.

Bessie came into the office while he was there, and after he had concluded his business with her father she took possession of him herself.

"I want you to take me out on the river," she said. "It's a lovely day."

"You forget, Bessie, that Fanwood is out for business these days, and not for fun," smiled her father.

"I think he might spare me an hour or two," she pouted, with a sidelong glance at the boy that was perfectly irresistible. "It is after three o'clock now. He can't do any more business to-day, anyway."

"How do you know he can't, puss?"

"I know he can't. Besides, I think he's done enough for to-day, anyway. You've given him a good big order. He ought to be satisfied with that."

"I guess I can spare the time to go on the river with you, Miss Bessie," said Joe, with a smile.

"There now, papa, I knew he could go," she cried, skipping out after her hat.

"Bessie will have her way," said the major, looking fondly after his only child. "I'm afraid I have spoiled her."

In a few minutes Bessie returned with a little gypsy straw on her golden locks, and she and Joe started for the river.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VANISHED SAILBOAT.

"I think we'd better take the sailboat, Bessie," said Joe. "There is a nice breeze, while rowing is pretty warm work, and we couldn't go very far."

"I had much rather go in the sailboat, Joe," Bessie replied.

"Are you willing to trust yourself in a sailboat with me?"

"Why not?" she asked, opening her eyes very wide.

"I've never taken you out in it yet, so you don't know whether I can handle the boat or not," he laughed.

"You wouldn't have suggested going out in her if you were not confident you could sail her all right."

"That's true enough," replied Joe, taking hold of the boat's painter and hauling her in close to the boys' swimming stage. "Now, step aboard."

He followed her, hoisted the mainsail, cast off the painter, and away they glided out into the river whose water, slightly stirred by the light wind, glistened in the afternoon sunshine.

The river was not very wide, and for some distance followed a course almost parallel with the trolley road which ran between Maplewood, Hornby, a mile from the academy, and Cedarville.

"We'll go up the river as far as Hornby," said Joe, "or further if you wish."

"That will be nice," replied Bessie, leaning back on the cock-pit seat, close to the boy whose hand guided the course of the boat.

"I'm awfully glad you're back again, Bessie," said Joe, earnestly.

"Are you really?" she laughed.

"Yes. I've felt pretty lonesome during the six weeks you were away."

"What a fib!" she answered with a little blush. "Didn't you write me about the fine time you and Bob Stewart had together on two or three occasions?"

"That's right," he admitted. "But Bob Stewart isn't you."

"Why, I should imagine you could have a great deal better time with him than with me. I'm only a girl, you know."

"Well, you see I don't think so much of him as I do of you, Bessie."

The girl blushed rosy red, looked across the river, and allowed her fingers to trail in the water.

"Don't you like me a little bit, too?" he asked, wistfully.

"Why, of course I like you," she responded. "Why shouldn't I?"

"How much do you like me?" persisted Joe, shifting the rudder so as to weather a turn in the river.

"Oh, I like you—lots. There now, are you satisfied?"

"I suppose I ought to be. At any rate, I like to hear you say so."

They were now passing Hornby, which lay about half a mile from the river.

Right ahead of them was a little wooded island, where many pretty wild flowers grew in profusion.

"Let's land on that island and get some of those flowers," suggested Bessie, eagerly.

"Certainly, if you would like to," agreed Joe, heading the sailboat into a small cove, and allowing her to push her nose up on the sand.

He got out on the narrow beach, tied the painter to a convenient tree, and then offered his hand to help her out of the boat.

They wandered around the edge of the island, picking wild flowers and talking about this thing or that.

They seemed to be very happy in each other's society, and rather careless of the flight of time.

The sun, which resembled a great ball of fire, slowly descended the western sky, until it almost kissed the horizon.

"We'd better cut across the island and start back. don't you think, Bessie?" suggested Joe.

"Yes," she replied.

He gathered the flowers into two big bunches, and secured each with a tendril of a creeping vine, then handing her one they started across the narrow island hand in hand.

"Good gracious! Where's the boat?" he exclaimed, as they came out into the cove where they had landed.

"Why, it's gone," she cried, nervously.

"There's no doubt of that; but I can't see how she got loose," in a puzzled tone, "for I am sure I tied the painter tight enough to this tree."

He looked up and down and across the river for the sailboat, but there was no sign of her anywhere.

He climbed on to a big stone to get a better view, but with no better result.

He examined the sand carefully near the mark which had been made by the bow of the boat, and he soon detected the footmarks of a man.

"Look there, Bessie," pointing at the prints. "Somebody was on the island when we came ashore, and he has taken our boat."

The girl stared blankly at the footprints and then at her companion.

"How are we going to get back to the academy without a boat?"

"That's a difficult question for me to answer. It looks as if we were marooned, and that isn't a cheerful thing to figure on."

"Oh, Joe, we may have to stay here all night. Papa won't know what has become of us."

"If I can't do any better I'll swim across to yonder bank and try to find a rowboat. There ought to be one up that creek yonder."

"But I should be afraid to stay here all by myself. Suppose that man who took the boat was to come back?"

"Let's walk to the other end of the island," said Joe.

They laid the flowers, in which they had now lost all interest, down on the beach and started through the trees.

Before they had gone far Bessie clutched the boy by the arm and pointed through a break in the little wood.

"Isn't that our boat?" she asked excitedly.

Sure enough it was, with the sail partly lowered and the painter tied around a big stone that projected out of the water a yard or two from the shore.

The island curved in at this point, and that was the reason Joe had not detected its presence from the cove.

"The man must have come ashore again," said Joe, seeing no signs of the person who had removed the sailboat from its original mooring place. "Or perhaps he is concealed in the cuddy. I see the slide is drawn back. Well, he had a great nerve to bring our boat around here. I'm going to wade out and regain possession of her."

"Oh, Joe; do be careful, please."

"Careful! We've got to have our boat, and if that chap interferes with me I'll punch his head."

He picked up a stout branch as a weapon of defence, and then walked out on the beach, followed by Bessie.

He pulled off his shoes and stockings, rolled up his trousers' legs, and waded into the water.

Reaching the boat he placed his hands on her gunwale to pull himself into the cockpit, when a face appeared in the opening that communicated with the cuddy.

Joe started back in astonishment, for he immediately recognized that villainous countenance.

It was the face of Patrick Flynn.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

As Flynn's eyes met those of the boy the expression of his countenance grew positively diabolical.

With a curse he started to spring out into the cockpit.

At the same moment Joe pulled himself aboard the boat.

In another moment the two clinched and began a struggle for the mastery.

Bessie uttered a cry from the shore as she watched the desperate fight now going on before her eyes.

As they staggered around the cockpit Joe all at once slipped, and they both went down together, the Irishman on top.

"Faith, I've got yez now, bad luck to yez!" cried Flynn, triumphantly.

The rascal had every advantage, for he had fastened one hand on Joe's throat, while with the other he reached out and grabbed up a block of hard wood which he saw under the seat.

The glare of his eyes as he raised the wooden billet to smash it down on the boy's head was almost that of a maniac.

Fanwood's life was in great danger, and he put up a game fight to save himself if he could.

In spite of Flynn's hold on his throat and the weight of the rascal's body upon him, he managed to squirm quickly to one side.

Bang!

The block of wood struck the floor of the cock-pit on the very spot where Joe's head had been a moment before.

The blow would have smashed the boy's head pretty badly had it landed.

"Do you want to kill me, you rascal?" demanded Joe.

"Kill yez! Well, wait till I get another chance at yez, and yez'll see," cried the infuriated man, reaching again for the block of wood which had bounced just out of his reach.

Fanwood, surmising his purpose, grabbed his extended arm, while with his other hand he tried to tear away Flynn's fingers that were pressing into his windpipe.

He could not do it.

The fellow glared down upon him, and tried to squeeze his throat tighter.

Joe began to gasp for breath.

A multitude of colored lights began to dance before his eyes, over which a dark blur seemed to be forming.

He could no longer see Flynn's form distinctly.

The rascal appeared to be hovering over him like some gigantic bird of prey, while between them sifted a blood-red haze through which the man's eyes shone like the distant headlights of twin locomotives.

The agony of those few moments was something awful to Joe, and yet through it all he kept his wits about him.

But for all that he could not disengage the stranglehold Flynn had got upon his neck, and it was but the question of seconds before he would succumb to his desperate assailant.

From the shore Bessie had seen them go down out of sight on the floor of the cock-pit, and she waited in vain for them to appear again.

She heard the noise of the struggle, then she saw Flynn raise the billet of wood and bring it down on the bottom of the boat with a bang.

She gave a scream of terror, for she pictured the boy lying senseless and bleeding in the cock-pit.

Looking about her in her desperation, she spied a heavy stick upon the beach.

Seizing it, she dashed right into the water and waded to the boat.

Looking in over the side she saw Flynn choking the life out of Joe.

The boy's nerveless fingers were dropping away from their hold on the rascal.

With a howl of triumph Flynn managed to get hold of the block of wood to complete his fiendish work.

With a cry of horror and anger Bessie scrambled aboard, raised the stick in both her hands, and brought it down on the villain as hard as she could.

He dropped like a stricken ox, and his fingers relaxed themselves from Joe's throat just at the critical moment.

Kneeling beside Joe she raised his white face in her arms, and begged him to speak to her.

"He is dead! Oh, heaven, he is dead!" she moaned, the tears streaming from her eyes. "Oh, Joe, Joe! Don't die! Please don't die! You must not. I love you, Joe!"

She kissed his lips and face passionately, calling him a score of dear names.

"Oh, Joe, Joe, I can't let you die! Indeed, I can't."

Her tears falling upon the boy's face revived him, and like in a delicious dream he heard her voice speaking caressingly to him, and her hands tenderly fondling him.

At last he opened his eyes, to find her arms holding his head lovingly to her breast, and her lips pressed tenderly against his.

"Bessie," he murmured.

As her name fluttered from his lips she uttered a little scream of joy.

"Oh, Joe, Joe! You won't die, will you?"

In that blissful moment all thoughts of Flynn and the horrible death he had escaped by a hair seemed to fade away, and he only seemed to know that Bessie really cared for him—really loved him with all her heart.

"Bessie, do you love me?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, yes; I love you with all my heart."

He put his arms around her, pulled her face down to his, and kissed her.

Then he struggled up and saw the unconscious Flynn.

"How is this, Bessie? You here and that rascal senseless! What does it mean?"

"I struck him, Joe," and with that she told him how she had come to his rescue.

"Bessie, you are a brave, nerry girl. You saved my life."

He then told her how Flynn had got the best of him, and how his last recollection was that the rascal was surely doing him up.

An hour later, with Flynn a prisoner in the cuddy; the sailboat arrived at her anchorage off the academy.

Joe told the story of their stirring adventure, and Major Pond's wrath and astonishment was very great.

Neither he nor Joe could understand why the villain was at large when he was supposed to be on his way to the State prison, a deputy sheriff having started to take him there that morning.

It subsequently appeared he had taken advantage of his guard's momentary inattention, rushed out on the platform of the car, and jumped from the fast-moving train.

He had made his way to the river, and in some way got to the island, where he lay concealed when Joe and Bessie arrived there themselves.

The police of Maplewood were speedily notified by telephone of his capture, and within two hours he was back in a prison cell, whence he was next day removed to the State prison.

Joe devoted the remaining days that intervened before the academy term began to winding up his waterproof paint business, as he now had something better on hand.

He enlarged his office, and added to his furniture and other belongings connected therewith.

With almost \$7,000 in the bank, he was satisfied that his business career had thus far been a great success, and he entertained flattering ideas of what he meant to accomplish when he entered the field of human industry on a larger scale. It is needless to say that the boy succeeded in his ventures, and finally built up a big business that made him rich.

And he was not alone in this belief, for both Major Pond and Bessie believed he possessed all the qualities that go to make up a successful business man.

Bessie is now his wife, of course, and she often speaks of the days of Joe's business beginning, when she looked upon him as The Smartest Boy In Town.

THE END.

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